









# TWENTY-FIVE MODERN PLAYS

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*REVISED EDITION*

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TWENTY-FIVE MODERN PLAYS, REVISED EDITION

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### What Is *Modern Drama*?

"Modern drama" is a term at once ambiguous and definitive. A collection of classical Greek tragedies, or Spanish comedies of the Golden Age, or Elizabethan or French dramas, has a homogeneity of both form and national idea. Intended for a particular audience, a particular theatre building, a particular national or philosophical frame of reference, they may be profitably studied as a unit, almost in isolation. There is no one form of modern drama, no single national or philosophical background, that is what makes it ambiguous. On the other hand, its very internationalism, or non-nationalism, defines it to a considerable extent. It is an art without a country, a vehicle for the expression of the ideas and ideals of an ever narrowing world. The great dramatist, whether he be Ibsen, or Shaw, or Giraudoux, is instantly at home in all countries, with all audiences.

### *The Heritage of the Nineteenth Century*

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the theatre was weighed down by an inheritance of stale ideas and a dramatic form which had outlived its usefulness. This was, of course, the old "romantic" form, which ignored the tight unities of Aristotelian theory. This romantic form was ideally suited to the spacious visions of the Elizabethans and to the bare stage on which their plays were acted, but it became increasingly awkward in a theatre that leaned ever more heavily on realistic scenery. The subject matter—love and honor in incredibly high places—tended to be completely removed from the life and interests of the audience. Victor Hugo, for example, insisted on telling a romantic tale about a Castilian noble whose concern for his honor led him to kill himself (at the very moment when his king had restored him to his lands and rights and when his ladylove was about to become his wife), because he had once made a rash promise to the villain. In England, James Sheridan Knowles was attempting to arouse the sympathy of audiences for a Roman father who murdered his daughter to protect her from dishonor. As a result the theatre, the legitimate theatre, was having a rather serious struggle for its existence—not simply because the settings and characters of these plays were remote—the spectacle of the past has always been one of the chief attractions of the theatre—but because the themes and ideas were remote. A vital drama must grow out of the life and ideas of its own time.

### *Melodrama*

The vital drama of the early nineteenth century, then, was not to be found in the officially supported legitimate theatres. It was rather to be sought in

the illegitimate popular houses devoted to melodrama, to plays of horror and excitement which were, nonetheless, concerned with human problems of the day. The plays of the Englishman, Douglas Jerrold, are perhaps a good instance. To be sure, he is fond of last-minute reprieves, of chairs which providentially fall apart to disclose hidden gold, of unreal catastrophes growing out of a thirst for alcohol. But the people of his plays, however crudely stereotyped, were recognizable to their audiences: simple sailors, hard-working farmers, ne'er-do-well sons. It is in the melodrama, not in the legitimate drama of the time, that you find factory hands, and railroad engines, and detectives, and telegraph offices, and ragpickers. In Victorian melodrama and its French equivalent the drama was returning to its function of reflecting and commenting on the life of its own day. The reflection is never wholly true, the commentary is for the most part pious balderdash, but the dramatist was at least aware of the physical changes of his world, if he totally ignored the change in manners and morals.

### *The Nineteenth-Century Background*

The older world, the eighteenth-century world, the world for which imitations of classical tragedy and comedy were more or less satisfactory, may be summed up with partial accuracy as the Age of Reason. That is, it was an age which seemed to have found the answers to all the questions that confronted it. The moral code, the religious and political systems had been long established, for the most part the men of that world were willing to conform to them. For at least one of its great artists the whole basis of human behavior was contained in the phrase, "Whatever is, is right."

The early nineteenth century, however, beginning to feel the impact of industrial invention and scientific discovery, was an Age of Questioning. And out of the ferments of industrial and political revolutions and the questioning of the moral and religious basis of society came the forms and subject matter of the modern drama. True, since the theatre is the most conventional of the arts and prefers to follow rather than lead its audiences, the new forms and the new subject matter were slow in developing. By 1850, for instance, the English drama was nearly half a century behind the times. And even in the nineties Shaw could include this passage of dialogue in *You Never Can Tell*:

*McComas* We're old-fashioned, the world thinks it has left us behind. There is only one place in all England where your opinions would still pass as advanced.

*Mrs. Clandon* [scornfully unconvinced] The Church, perhaps?

*McComas* No, the theater.

But rather surprisingly in the face of the usual attacks on the theatre by its critics, the reform of the drama came from within, spontaneously, from the theatre itself, not in response to public demand or, at least on the Continent, from the support of an interested clique.

The New Theatre movement was world-wide, (a) beginning in some countries with the physical aspects of play production, (b) beginning in others with the work of playwrights sensitive to the changes in their world.

*A The Reform of the Theatre*

The production of a play in 1800 was very little different from its production in 1700. The theatre was still an ornate, ill-lighted cavern with the audience carefully stratified into pit, boxes, and gallery, according to its financial and social position. The settings were of the wing-and-drop variety: a backdrop painted in perspective at the rear of the stage and a series of huge flats or wings, which as often as not had no connection with either the backdrop or the play, set parallel with it. Lighting was of the most primitive sort, candles or oil lamps being notoriously difficult to control. Costumes were chosen with a kind of studied insouciance, Cleopatra and Queen Elizabeth both appearing in the same outfit, a modish Georgian dinner gown, and Macbeth meeting the frilled and furbelowed witches in a full suit of British regimentals.

Perhaps the first of the producers to notice that the stage was antiquated and outmoded was William Charles Macready, the Victorian tragedian. During his years of apprenticeship in the London theatre he observed that of all the arts and sciences, the art of the stage alone seemed to stand still in a rapidly advancing world. In 1837 he became manager of London's national theatre, Covent Garden, and there proceeded to institute a series of reforms which colored the future history of the drama. "Fidelity of illustration" was his watchword, every aspect of a production should contribute to the effect of the whole. If the dramatist was holding the mirror up to nature, then it was the business of the producer to see that the finished unit should be recognizably natural, that setting, costuming, lighting, even acting should be conceived in the spirit of the text.

Macready's example was seized upon by later producers as an excuse to drown the general stage with plush, to overdo the spectacular aspects of a production until the play itself was quite lost, and *Punch* spoke derisively of the Decorated Drama and the Art of Bric-a-Brac. Elsewhere, however, and quite independently, other theatrical experiments were being carried on which had a marked influence on the modern drama.

The most famous of these was the theatre set up by the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen in his little German state. The Duke was an amateur but accomplished painter and a lover of the drama. He undertook personally to design every detail of the productions of his little theatre, not merely the costumes and the settings, but the properties *and the action* were designed according to an over-all concept of the meaning of the play. Like Macready, he realized that the whole performance is the sum of its parts. Further, he was determined that the stage setting should be more than a background to the play: it should be shaped around the action of the play and provide an atmospheric envelope for the performance. Thus a production by the Meiningen players acquired a unity which Macready could not attain in the English theatre, it was an organic and dynamic whole.

One did not have to be a wealthy amateur to make one's mark on the New Theatre Movement. Quite the contrary. André Antoine was an im-



poverished clerk in the Paris Gas Works with the single-minded indefatigability which is the birthright of the stage-struck. He had also (which is not always the characteristic of the stage-struck) talent and intelligence. A voracious reader, he also haunted museums and galleries until he was forcefully struck with the discrepancy between the artificiality and pseudo reality of the theatre, and the naturalism of the novelists and the impressionism of the painters. "The serious theater [should be] the living image of life," Antoine declared, dedicating himself and his movement to realism. With industry, diplomacy, and daring, he took over a group of amateur actors, got up a bill of revolutionary one-act plays, and named his venture the Théâtre Libre. In nearly every respect, in its repertory, its subscription audience, its constant battle with the censors, and its equally constant threat of financial disaster, the Théâtre Libre was the model for its offshoots in other countries.

The Théâtre Libre began in the spring of 1887. Three years later, under the leadership of Otto Brahm, the Berlin Freie Bühne was organized, presenting as its opening play Ibsen's *Ghosts*, also to be one of Antoine's triumphs. Indeed the history of the Free Theatre movement could almost be traced by listing the performances of *Ghosts* across the European continent. The Germans went a step beyond Antoine in 1890 with the establishment of the Freie Volksbühne, "a social-democratic organization," as its prospectus announced, "bringing before its audience plays which offer a social criticism of life."

In 1891, thanks to a young Dutch critic, J. T. Grein, the modern drama arrived in England. His Independent Theatre opened, of course, with a production of *Ghosts*, the shock of which produced reams of largely unfavorable publicity, and won the immediate support of Bernard Shaw. Out of it grew such well-remembered producing groups as the Stage Society, the Barker-Vedrenne management at the Court Theatre, and the various ventures encouraged by Miss A. E. F. Horniman in Manchester and Dublin.

The New Theatre reached Russia in 1898 with the establishment of the world-famous Moscow Art Theatre. Its two directors, Konstantin Stanislavsky, an amateur artist, and V. Nemirovich-Danchenko, a professional manager, developed a theory of staging which was the ultimate in realism. The cast of *The Lower Depths*, for instance, was sent off to live among the thieves and beggars of the story. "The Stanislavsky method" of training actors has become a byword in the profession, it involves the creation of a character in every detail and the complete abandonment of the traditional conventions of acting. The same painstaking care was expended on the staging. For the production of the historical drama, *Tsar Feodor*, genuine antiques were assembled from all over the country. Nothing, they declared, was too precious to be lavished upon "the creative life of the theater."

In America, the beginnings of the New Theatre were tentative and long delayed. The Washington Square Players, a group of Greenwich Village artists, and the Provincetown Players, members of a summer colony on Cape Cod, began almost simultaneously about 1916 to experiment with one-act plays written by their fellows. If, by that late date, their ventures into realism

could hardly be other than conventional, the spirit that moved them was still revolutionary—and amateur, as compared with the wholly commercial milieu of the professional theatre. A sentence or two from one of their ambitious apologies for their life could very well apply to the "Free Theatre" in any country.

Primitive drama, the expression of the communal or religious life of the organic human group, the tribe, had spontaneously the unity of a pure art. There may be 200 actors dramatically dancing the conflict of Winter and Spring, but all that all of them do in that drama springs from one shared fund of feelings, ideas, impulses. Unity is not imposed on them by the will of one of their number, but comes from that deep level in the spirit of each where all their spirits are one. The aim of the founders of the Provincetown Players is to make all hands work from that level and to do it by recreating in a group of modern individuals, individuals far more highly differentiated than primitive people, a kindredness of minds, a spiritual unity resembling the primitive unity of the tribe, a unity which may spontaneously create the unity necessary to the art of the theatre.

The constant repetition of the word "unity" is not casual. Unity is the key to the art of the modern theatre, first heard in Macready's incumbency at Covent Garden, insisted upon by the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, and practiced by Antoine and Stanislavsky and the Provincetown. It is a reminder that, however possible it may be to consider a play of Shakespeare or Racine as a dramatic poem, the modern drama is only in part a literary art and must be considered constantly in terms of its realization on the stage—not as a printed text but as a produced play.

### *B The Reform in Playwrighting*

#### THE WELL-MADE PLAY

Analogies are, like generalizations, frequently so pat as to be suspect, but one can hardly avoid pointing out that the immediate effect of the mechanization of early nineteenth-century society was the mechanization of the drama. The machine age produced the machine-made play. Invented in the early years of the century by an industrious French hack writer, Eugène Scribe, developed by him and his successor, Viktorien Sardou, the *pièce bien-fait* or well-made play superseded the older, "romantic" form and became the dramatic vehicle for realism and the problem play. Economy and precision were the watchwords of the new industrialists, and economy and precision are the watchwords of the well-made playwright. His story is told without waste motion, without subsidiary or parallel incidents. Nothing in the play distracts attention from the main action, everything must contribute directly to it. The dramatist began at the end of his story, with its climax, very much as the writer of detective fiction must, and worked backwards, planting the clues and complications which would "lead" inevitably to the denouement. The result was a highly ingenious machine, and it is frequently a pleasure to watch the apparently unrelated wheels suddenly mesh together to produce some startling effect. But, although the dramatist was careful to write in prose

and to surround his characters with the trappings of everyday existence, the well-made play could hardly be called a picture of life. To revert to the analogy, it was a machine that worked smoothly but produced nothing.

Various playwrights tinkered with the form of the well-made play in an attempt to put it to use, to give it significance. One of the earliest of these was Alexandre Dumas fils, celebrated author of *La Dame aux Camélias*. He was perhaps the first to insist that the playwright must be a thinker as well as an entertainer, that the drama should serve a social purpose. His innovation was to organize his plays around an idea, a thesis, and to see to it that the action of the play justified the thesis he was supporting. For all his good intentions, M. Dumas was perhaps too close to M. Scribe. The thesis that he set out to prove invariably turns out to be an antiquated platitude with little relation to the actual thought and beliefs of his period. It remained for Henrik Ibsen to adapt the form of the well-made play to the actual problems of his age.

The plays of Ibsen's realistic period, beginning with *The Pillars of Society*, are the finest examples of the genuine usefulness of the machine. The precision and economy of these plays are very nearly unmatched: each character is directly concerned with the central situation, every scene, every speech, develops the situation toward its inevitable climax. And the subject of the play is always one which grows directly out of the basic conflicts of a civilization in the process of reorientation. Only careful analysis will reveal the art of the playwright. Ibsen is here the complete realist, drawing his materials and characters and settings from commonplace life but, like the realist in general, selecting his details and points of emphasis to give a shaping, a significance to human experience. (See the analysis of *Rosmersholm*, p. xv.) And once Ibsen, with consummate mastery, had shown the way, other and lesser men were able to produce an endless series of well-made, realistic problem plays, represented in the present volume by such works as *Light-o'-Love*, *La Malquerida*, *John Ferguson*, and *The Silver Cord*.

The well-made play also contributed a sense of form to the playwrights who wished to follow the creed of naturalism as defined by Émile Zola. Beginning with the principle that every individual is the product of his heredity and environment, the naturalists determined to represent life as it is—ostensibly without shaping or direction or selection on the part of the artist. Analysis of *Comrades*, or *The Lower Depths*, or *The Cherry Orchard*, or such later plays as *The Rats* and *The Plough and the Stars* will show that selection and emphasis have inevitably taken place, however, and that this selection and arrangement provide the drama with a core of meaning, a theme of universal implication.

#### THE REVOLT AGAINST THE WELL-MADE PLAY

'The well-made play is thus the basic form of the modern drama from the earliest ventures of Ibsen to the latest season on Broadway. But it is characteristic of the artist to be discontented with the machine, however proficient, however perfect. Even Ibsen, who did so much to make the form productive, tired of its very perfection and found himself seeking new methods to express,

not the social problems of his day, but the deeper, psychological conflicts within the individual. In his final group of plays, climaxed by *John Gabriel Borkman*, he turns to symbolism, to the methods of poetry, to communicate to his audience his vision of man in the universe, rather than, as before, limiting himself to man in society.<sup>1</sup>

'If the history of Ibsen's dramatic career is in a sense a forecast of the history of modern drama, from the perfection of the form of the well-made play to the revolt against it, the development of his use of dramatic symbols is equally instructive.<sup>2</sup> The well-made play, in its purest state ("Sardoodledom," as Shaw called it), made great use of inanimate actors—letters, handkerchiefs, glasses of water, poisonous powders—to keep the plot in motion. In his first attempt Ibsen makes typical use of these convenient props. As he refined the vehicle and put it to real work, he discovered a means to make the inanimate actor (without which he could not do) a part of both the action and the theme, the basic idea, of the play. As a simple example, Hedda Gabler shoots herself with a pistol which had been bequeathed her by her father. But she had earlier in the play pointed out that the pistol was all that remained to her from her former way of life, of the meaningless, baseless society in which she had moved. This concrete object is thus a symbol of the intangible and impalpable milieu which shaped her, and her suicide becomes, not only tragic and ironic, but a pointed comment on that society.<sup>3</sup>

In Ibsen's later plays, the symbols occupy an increasingly prominent position, becoming almost mystic in *Borkman* and *When We Dead Awaken*. Although these have never been among his most popular or successful plays on the stage, the symbolic technique employed in them has had a wide influence on the later drama. Maurice Maeterlinck, the Belgian poet and mystic, has devoted himself almost completely to the symbolic play on romantic themes, producing in *Pelléas and Mélisande* a subtle and poetic tragedy incapable of statement in any other terms than its own, with a theme that must be "felt along the heart." The romantic symbolism of Maeterlinck has its analogue in the realistic symbolism of such a dramatist as Tchekhov. The Cherry Orchard, in the play of that name, is no mere ornament but vitally connected with the action and with the characters and with the theme. It is both a fact, an object, and an interpretation of the fact.

A further development of the dramatic use of symbols is to be found in the play form inadequately labeled "expressionism." In this complete and final revolt against realism every character, every object in the play is a symbol of some social or psychological phenomenon, and the meaning of the whole must be sought in an analysis of these symbols.<sup>4</sup> The form traces its origin to the later works of August Strindberg, an indefatigable experimenter. Although he is here represented by his naturalistic *Comrades*, it is possible that Strindberg's greatest and most influential achievement is in his expressionistic *Dream Play* and *Spook Sonata*. These are both, however, highly personal works, depending for their interpretation upon an intimate knowledge of the author's life and character. It has seemed better to illustrate the form with the more "public" performances of *Gas* and *The Great God Brown*. Expressionism is a

difficult and, for the most part, unpopular form and is rarely seen in its pure state outside of little and experimental theatres. It has, however, provided additional tools for the commercial dramatist, as the dream sequences in musical comedies and the movies are constantly reminding us. More than this, of course, it has widened the range of the drama, opened up new subject matter, and provided a method for treating the completely intangible states of the soul and the mind.

The devices of expressionism have also been of greatest assistance to the new school of poetic dramatists. They can be found in T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, in Auden's *Ascent of F 6*, in Cocteau's *Infernal Machine* and Giraudoux's brilliant *The Trojan War Will Not Take Place*. Indeed, the combination of the form of the well-made play with the devices of expressionism has resulted in some of the outstanding productions of the contemporary theatre, from the discussion plays of Bernard Shaw to the folk tragedies of Garcia Lorca.

The modern drama is an art of variety, richness, and complexity. Based on problems and conflicts that transcend the boundaries of race and state, on conflicts that have grown out of too rapidly acquired knowledge of powers hitherto unrevealed, modern drama—like the serious drama of any period—has undertaken to give us an understanding of our world, a consciousness of our vulnerability, and perhaps a conscience about our new-found strength.

## To the Student

### ON READING PLAYS

Reading a play, particularly a modern play, can be a simple and enjoyable experience. The primary purpose of the dramatist is to give pleasure, and it is undeniable that such plays as *Command Decision*, *The Plough and the Stars*, and *The Silver Cord* do yield some portion of the pleasure even to the reader which they give more generously to the spectator. But these are, on the surface at least, fairly direct plays. A large part of the repertory of the modern drama, and an important part, is made up of plays whose surface meaning is not apparent and whose construction is anything but simple. Yet unless we are to confine ourselves to the relatively limited ideas and subject matter of the realistic play, the more complex forms must be studied. Careful analysis of the play will give, not merely an understanding of dramatic form, but a richer and more pleasurable experience from the work itself.

1. **VISUALIZE THE ACTION** Any of the plays in the present collection will yield to analysis if the student (and his teacher) will constantly bear in mind that he is dealing with a play and not prose fiction. That is, what is here set down in print is only a portion of the finished work of art. The General Introduction has attempted to show how interdependent are the arts of the producer and the dramatist in the modern theatre. An awareness of this interdependence is important to the sensitive reader. He must visualize the stage, visualize the actors moving on it. As an aid to visualization a number of

photographs of actual productions of the plays are included in this volume. The lengthy stage directions of the plays, a device which first began to appear in the nineteenth century, are, of course, a further aid to visualization. They should be read with care, and every detail noted for the enlightenment it can give.

Consider the opening stage directions of *Rosmersholm*.

*"Sitting room at Rosmersholm, spacious, old-fashioned, and comfortable [Does not the word old-fashioned establish both the description of the room and something about the people who live in it? It is to become weighted with meaning as the play proceeds] In front, on the right, a stove decked with fresh birch-branches and wild flowers To the left, a window, and before it a stand with flowers and plants [These same flowers and plants become significant early in the play in the discussion of the dead wife] . On the walls, old and more recent portraits of clergymen, officers, and government officials in uniform [We know at once what kind of family we are dealing with, a family with traditions and a tendency to conservatism and respectability in its choice of professions]"*

The next direction concerns the leading lady. Rebecca West sits *by the window, crocheting a large shawl which is nearly finished*. The audience responds unconsciously to this picture, the reader must realize it for himself. The crocheting of a large shawl is work for an old woman, or for a young woman who has little to do but watch and wait and ponder. Rebecca West is a young woman.

These two directions, then, have given us not merely information but an attitude, a feeling, about both the setting and the character. The same may be said of the smaller directions scattered through the play to describe the manner in which the lines are to be spoken, or the action which accompanies them. To consider an early passage.

*Madam Helseth* No wonder the Pastor thinks twice about setting foot on that bridge. A place where a thing like that has happened—

*Rebecca [folding up her work]* They cling to their dead here at Rosmersholm.

The action is as casual as the speech is at once resigned and indulgent. But the tension increases at once, with the housekeeper's reply.

*Madam Helseth* Now I would say, Miss, that it's the dead that clings to Rosmersholm.

*Rebecca [looks at her]* The dead? What makes you fancy that?

The reader must see the change both in Rebecca's actions and in her mood as Madam Helseth quite unintentionally makes a point. It is the first hint of her connection with the death of Beata, the gradual revelation of which occupies the major portion of the play. It is with an echo of this remark that the play ends, commenting ironically on the old housekeeper's shrewdness and the rightness of Rebecca's fleeting gesture of apprehension.

2 ANALYZE THE STRUCTURE The reader should also study a play with an awareness that it is a unit composed of lesser units, like a man or a building or

a poem As a man is built cell by cell, or a building brick by brick, or a poem stanza by stanza, so a play is built scene by scene and act by act, though the scene divisions may be very skillfully disguised In the old Continental tradition, a new scene<sup>1</sup> began, and was so marked, whenever a new character came on stage Something of that tradition survives in the structure of many modern plays The first act of *Rosmersholm*, for instance, is made up of eight scenes

- 1 Rebecca and Madam Helseth
- 2 Rebecca and Kroll
- 3 Rebecca, Kroll, and Rosmer
- 4 Rebecca, Kroll, Rosmer, and Brendel
- 5 Kroll and Rosmer
- 6 Rebecca, Kroll, and Rosmer
- 7 Rebecca and Rosmer
- 8 Rebecca and Madam Helseth

This does not mean that the action has been divided up into eight parts but—which is a very different matter indeed—that eight scenes have been welded together to form the larger action Even a glance at the listing will show that there is a pattern of movement, coming to a climax in Scene 5 and completing a kind of full circle at Scene 8

But a closer analysis of each scene's contents will show that there is more than a casual relationship between the subdivisions of the act The structural pattern, that is, is paralleled by the development of the idea and the subject matter of the play

The first scene, between Rebecca and the housekeeper, should normally consist of *exposition*, should establish the locale and the situation out of which the subsequent action of the play will develop As we have already seen, the setting and the behavior of Rebecca do hint at both of these matters But, and this of utmost importance in capturing the interest of the audience, the brief scene also *advances the action* by establishing certain facts and raising certain questions to which we will want to know the answers (Human curiosity is the dramatist's most valuable tool) In this scene we share the interest of the two ladies in the arrival of Rosmer and the Schoolmaster, and we register the carefully pointed fact that there is a foot-bridge over the mill-race outside the window, and that there is a popular legend, about White Horses, connected with the mansion This leads directly to the second scene, the entrance of Rector Kroll As an old friend who has been long absent, he naturally may be brought up to date on recent events, and we have no feeling of artifice as bits of the past are revealed to us The *exposition* in this scene is largely concerned with tantalizing fragments of information about Beata, and Rebecca's youth The *action* advances as Kroll's character is revealed in his reactions to his family life and political ideas, and in Kroll's suggestion of marriage as a solution to Rebecca's indefinite plans for her future

<sup>1</sup> It is of course necessary to distinguish between the word "scene" used for the setting and "scene" as a subdivision of the plot



We are now prepared for the entrance of Rosmer, which begins the third scene. The *exposition* here, skillfully mortised into the action, reveals Rosmer's attitude toward Rebecca and her treatment of his dead wife, and suggests something of his nature as he acknowledges Kroll's guidance of his career. Kroll informs him of the revolt which has occurred in his schoolroom and in his family circle because of the evil influence of Mortensgård and his *Beacon* newspaper. There is also some discussion of the past of Ulric Brendel to prepare us for his scene. But each of these past events assists in propelling the action, in moving the play forward. Suspense is generated as Rosmer announces almost at once that he has many things to talk over with his former mentor, as Rebecca urges him to "do it now!" Kroll is determined to fight the Radical element in his community, and he has established a newspaper of which he expects Rosmer to become editor. Rosmer is about to explain why he cannot—when Ulric Brendel appears.

Scene 4, which belongs to Ulric Brendel, is a kind of catalyst in the action of the first act. Brendel is a serio-comic portrait of the idealist about to enter the struggles of the material world. But grotesque though he may be, his appearance in Rosmersholm is what encourages Johannes to carry through with the great revelation which forms the center of the climactic scene of the act. This is always the function of character, and characterization, in the drama, characters do not exist in these tightly made plays for themselves alone. Each character impinges directly upon the action and contributes to the revelation of the theme, just as Brendel contrasts with Rosmer and Kroll (thus revealing something more of their natures) and by his example forces Rosmer's hand. In Scene 5, Rosmer and Kroll are, unobtrusively, left alone, and in the long dialogue which follows, the past and the present—the *exposition* and the *action*—are wedded as Rosmer explains the change that has come over his thinking and the impossibility of his casting his lot with Kroll's Conservatives. He declares his purpose to ennoble mankind by freeing their minds and purifying their wills. Kroll is determined to win him back when Rebecca's entrance begins a new, brief scene.

In Scene 6, a chance remark of Rosmer's arouses in Kroll's mind the recollection of some words Beata had spoken before her death—suggesting a connection between the suicide, Rebecca, and Rosmer's new Radical ideas. But Kroll dismisses it as unworthy of him and leaves abruptly. In Scene 7, Rebecca discovers that Rosmer is calm after his confession to Kroll, but the final scene looks forward again, with her allusion to the White Horse, and Madam Helseth's curtain line.

The same kind of analysis may be applied to the remaining acts. It will reveal that Ibsen's technique is to weave the exposition about past events through the play, so that, although only a few hours may transpire in the action, many years of the characters' lives are actually involved. But the exposition is so handled that the revelation of the past comes at a critical moment in the action (as in Rebecca's confession), when the accumulating consequences of the past are made clear. The play thus acquires a double plane of action, so to speak, and probes more deeply into the nature and mystery of man.



3 INVESTIGATE THE DRAMATIC SYMBOLS OR IMAGES It is apparent, too, that *Rosmersholm* is full of symbols. Some discussion of Ibsen's use of this device has been included in the General Introduction. Here it may be sufficient to point to the already mentioned symbolic significance of the setting, with its family portraits, and to call attention to the development of the legend of the White Horse. Madam Helseth introduces it as a kind of folk story, the familiar family ha'nt that appears when there is to be a death in the house. The housekeeper is rather proud of the family ghost, but to Rebecca it becomes an emblem merely. After Kroll and Rosmer have split over the issue of conservatism and radicalism, she says, as Kroll leaves, "Let us hope he mayn't meet with the White Horse. I'm afraid we shall be hearing from the bogies now." When Madam Helseth asks if she thinks someone is going to die, Rebecca replies, "No, why should I think so? But there are so many sorts of white horses in the world." She refers to them again when Rosmer declares his conviction that no cause triumphs that has its origin in sin. "Oh, these are only ancestral doubts—ancestral fears—ancestral scruples. They say the dead come back to Rosmersholm in the shape of rushing white horses. I think this shows that it is true." Ibsen presents a double symbol, then, of the obstacle to the free development of Rebecca and Rosmer—the solid, oak-panneled house, and the mystic folk image of the White Horse, the dead hand of the past forcing conformity upon the present. At the end of the play, Rosmer himself admits that "we of this house" can never escape "from the white horse."

4 ABSTRACT THE THEME It is true of the drama in general, and of modern drama in most especial particular, that no element of the whole, however small, is unimportant. Since it is an art in which concentration and compression are of the utmost importance, the drama has neither time nor space for extraneous matter, for objects, characters, or situations unconnected with the central action or idea. This will be apparent at once to the reader of *Rosmersholm*, where the technique of realistic play construction is exemplified at its most perfect. But concentration on a single theme is also the core of the freer form of the non-realistic drama (*Gas*, *The Great God Brown*, *The Ascent of F 6*), every detail, however disparate, can be brought to bear upon the central idea.

The discovery of this theme, or unifying idea, is the penultimate purpose of play analysis. And it should be pointed out at once that the theme is not the "moral" of the play, a major play is too serious a work of art to have a moral in the Aesopian sense. As Ibsen said, it was the artist's business to ask questions, not to answer them. The theme of the play is, rather, the author's vision of the world, his "interpretation of experience," and the major play is inevitably one which adds something to our understanding of human nature in general. The theme, then, is not the plot of the play, not the *particular* action, but the *general* human experience to which it may be related.

The *plot* of *Rosmersholm* is the series of events leading up to the double suicide of Rebecca and Johannes. That is our immediate concern in the theatre, or in a first reading of the play. But in a rereading we will begin to notice the symbols, and the significant lines: the stolid room with its stuffy portraits will become linked with Rebecca's statement that the Rosmer view

of life ennobles, but kills happiness, the constantly enlarging symbol of the White Horse will impress upon us that this is but a particular example of human experience. The *theme* of *Rosmersholm* thus becomes the tragedy of the idealist who is incapable of compromise and so meets inevitable defeat. And the steps by which we arrive at this statement can be as accurately charted as the Lincoln Highway.

5 SYNTHESIZE One final thing remains to do. When the analysis has been completed, when the structure, the characters, the symbols, the theme have been examined and their relationships understood, the play should be re-read in the light of this new comprehension. Read aloud, in a group, with each "actor" attempting to convey as much as possible of his understanding of the characters *in their relation to the whole play*, *Rosmersholm* or nearly any other of the plays here included will come alive much as it comes alive in the theatre under the guidance of a skilled director. Analysis is but dissection, which is a kind of murder. Synthesis is a kind of resurrection. It is in this synthesis, following upon the understanding gained from analysis, that the reader approaches the fullest experience of a work of art.

### A Note to the Teacher

Mr. Tucker, the original editor of this collection, wrote in his Introduction "Probably no one will be altogether satisfied with the choice of plays in this volume. No doubt, the ideal selection would be twenty-five plays by the twenty-five greatest dramatists of the contemporary theatre, each represented by his best (and most typical) play." The difficulties in the way of such an arrangement, as Mr. Tucker pointed out, lay in the limitations of copyright and the fallibility of individual judgment.

The passing of nearly two decades, while increasing the candidates for inclusion, has not eliminated the difficulties. Eliot, Lorca, and Giraudoux were unavailable. Mr. Shaw, certainly the major figure of the British theatre, is still adamant against becoming a part of a school text, although inexpensive reprints of many of his plays are fortunately available. And, particularly at the present moment in history, one has constantly to question one's enthusiasms and pray for judgments which will not be based primarily on the playwright's good intentions.

This revision has been undertaken with the aim of making available to students a representative selection from the repertory of modern drama. Certain of the plays in the original edition have been dropped, either because they have lost their vitality with the passing years or because more important examples of the form or content have emerged. It is the conviction of the revising editor that, of the plays here presented, nearly all of those before 1920 may safely be considered what used to be called the "standard drama." Those written after 1920 are less certain to become standard, they do, however, represent the breadth of subject matter and the variety of form and treatment which have made the modern drama so lively a mirror of the contemporary world.

The arrangement of the plays in chronological order arises from the necessity of arranging them in some sort of order, not because the chronological is superior to any other. Indeed, in a study of the modern drama it is very nearly meaningless. The arrangement might as well have been in terms of form—the well-made play and the anti-well-made play, or in terms of style—realism, naturalism, symbolism, expressionism, or in terms of subject matter—social, economic, political, psychological problems, or indeed in terms of national origin. These are simply a few of the possible approaches to a study of dramatic literature. The analysis of *Rosmersholm* provided for the student may suggest the preference of the present editor, but he is not so foolhardy as to suggest that it is the only, or even the best, approach.

A S D

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A genuine recognition of the loving and painstaking labor that went into the original compilation of this volume can be arrived at only after an attempt at revising a small portion of it. The soundness of Mr. Tucker's selections and of his introductions to the individual plays is demonstrated by the fact that over two-thirds of the plays were retained and only minor changes, mainly in chronology, were demanded in the introductions. For these changes, for the general introduction, and for the selection and editorial matter of the eight new plays, the revising editor is solely responsible.

Acknowledgment for the use of copyright material is made elsewhere, here a general acknowledgment must be made to Arthur Mizener, of Carleton College, for kindly criticism, and to my wife, for the willing suspension of happier occupations for the drudgery of scissors and paste.

The continuously frustrating business of assembling the illustrations was considerably eased by many people connected with the theater and with various theater collections. Individual acknowledgment of the source is given in the caption of each picture, but special thanks for aid to an editor in distress must be made to Jane Cowl, Walter Hampden, Marguerite McAneny of the Princeton University Library, Elizabeth P. Barrett and the staff of the Theater Collection of the New York Public Library, Lennox Robinson of the Abbey Theater, the staff of the Theater Guild, René Thomas of the Théâtre Louis Jouvet, Florence Vandamm, Dr. William Van Lennep of the Harvard Theater Collection, and Hope T. White.

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## HENRIK IBSEN

HENRIK IBSEN, the father of the modern drama, was born in Skien, a country village in Norway, in 1828. After a youth of great poverty, he made various attempts to become a druggist, a landscape painter, and a college graduate. In all of these he was unsuccessful, only an occasional romantic poem bringing him any attention from his friends or the public at large. His poetic gift, however, led to his introduction to Ole Bull, the celebrated violinist, who had established a national theatre in Bergen and who immediately hired the inexperienced young poet as stage manager and director. From that year, 1851, until his death in 1906, Ibsen's life was almost entirely devoted to the theatre, first as producer and later as playwright. Indeed, it might be said that, once he withdrew from actual management in 1862, he had no biography but only a bibliography. Once established as a playwright, he did not haunt lecture platforms or salons, he seldom appeared in the public prints or involved himself in scandals or literary disputes—he wrote plays.

This absorption in his art was made possible in part by a pension granted him by the Norwegian government which permitted him to live inexpensively abroad. Most of his writing was done in Italy and Germany—this distance from the home country, while it did not interfere with his disenchantment, enabling him to take the larger view of his subject matter. A discussion of his technique and an analysis of the present play may be found in the General Introduction.

*Rosmersholm*, written in 1886, was first produced in Bergen in 1887 and later in the same year in Berlin. Its first appearance in English was in London, 1891, with F. R. Benson and Florence Farr. It has since formed a staple in the repertoire of many well-known actresses from the Italian Eleanora Duse to the American Eva Le Gallienne.

## CHARACTERS

JOHANNES ROSMER, *of Rosmersholm, formerly clergyman of the parish*

REBECCA WEST, *in charge of Rosmer's household*

RECTOR \* KROLL, *Rosmer's brother-in-law*

ULRIC BRENDEL

PETER MORTENSGÅRD †

MADAM HELSETH, *housekeeper at Rosmersholm*

*The action takes place at Rosmersholm, an old family seat near a small coast town in the west of Norway*

\* "Rector" in the Scotch Continental sense of headmaster of a school, not in the English sense of a beneficed clergyman

† Pronounce *Mortensgore*

# ROSMERSHOLM

## ACT ONE

*Sitting-room at Rosmersholm, spacious, old-fashioned, and comfortable. In front, on the right, a stove decked with fresh birch-branches and wild flowers. Farther back, on the same side, a door. In the back wall, folding-doors opening into the hall. To the left, a window, and before it a stand with flowers and plants. Beside the stove a table with a sofa and easy chairs. On the walls, old and more recent portraits of clergymen, officers and government officials in uniform. The window is open, so are the door into the hall and the house door beyond. Outside can be seen an avenue of fine old trees, leading up to the house. It is a summer evening, after sunset.*

REBECCA WEST is sitting in an easy-chair by the window, and crocheting a large white woollen shawl, which is nearly finished. She now and then looks out expectantly through the leaves of the plants. MADAM HELSETH presently enters from the right.

Madam Helseth I suppose I had better begin to lay the table, Miss?

Rebecca West Yes, please do. The Pastor must soon be in now.

Madam Helseth Don't you feel the draught, Miss, where you're sitting?

Rebecca Yes, there is a little draught. Perhaps you had better shut the window.

[MADAM HELSETH shuts the door into the hall and then comes to the window.]

Madam Helseth [about to shut the window, looks out] Why, isn't that the Pastor over there?

Rebecca [hastily] Where? [Rises] Yes, it is he. [Behind the curtain] Stand aside—don't let him see us.

Madam Helseth [keeping back from the window] Only think, Miss—he's beginning to take the path by the mill again.

Rebecca He went that way the day before yesterday, too. [Peeps out between the curtains and the window-frame] But let us see whether—

Madam Helseth Will he venture across the foot-bridge?

Rebecca That is what I want to see. [After a pause] No, he is turning. He is going by the upper road again. [Leaves the window] A long way round.

Madam Helseth Dear Lord, yes. No wonder the Pastor thinks twice about setting foot on that bridge. A place where a thing like that has happened—

Rebecca [folding up her work] They cling to their dead here at Rosmersholm.

Madam Helseth Now I would say, Miss, that it's the dead that clings to Rosmersholm.

Rebecca [looks at her] The dead?

Madam Helseth Yes, it's almost as if they couldn't tear themselves away from the folk that are left.

Rebecca What makes you fancy that?

Madam Helseth Well, if it wasn't for that, there would be no White Horse, I suppose.

Rebecca Now what is all this about the White Horse, Madam Helseth?

Madam Helseth Oh, I don't like to talk about it. And, besides, you don't believe in such things.

Rebecca Do you believe in it, then?

Madam Helseth [goes and shuts the window] Oh, you'd only be for laughing at me, Miss. [Looks out] Why, isn't that Mr Rosmer on the mill-path again—?

Rebecca [looks out] That man there? [Goes to the window] No, that's the Rector!

Madam Helseth Yes, so it is.

Rebecca This is delightful. You may be sure he's coming here.

Madam Helseth He goes straight over the foot-bridge, he does. And yet she was his sister, his own flesh and blood. Well, I'll go and lay the table then, Miss West.

[She goes out to the right. REBECCA stands at the window for a short time, then smiles and nods to some one outside. It begins to grow dark.]

Rebecca [goes to the door on the right] Oh, Madam Helseth, you might let us have some little extra dish for supper. You know what the Rector likes best.

Madam Helseth [outside] Oh, yes, Miss, I'll see to it.



*Rebecca* [*opens the door to the hall*] At last—! How glad I am to see you, my dear Rector

*Rector Kroll* [*in the hall, laying down his stick*] Thanks Then I am not disturbing you?

*Rebecca* You? How can you ask?

*Kroll* [*comes in*] Amiable as ever [*Looks round*] Is Rosmer upstairs in his room?

*Rebecca* No, he is out walking He has stayed out rather longer than usual, but he is sure to be in directly [*Motioning him to sit on the sofa*] Won't you sit down till he comes?

*Kroll* [*laying down his hat*] Many thanks [*Sits down and looks about him*] Why, how you have brightened up the old room! Flowers everywhere!

*Rebecca* Mr Rosmer is so fond of having fresh, growing flowers about him

*Kroll* And you are too, are you not?

*Rebecca* Yes, they have a delightfully soothing effect on me We had to do without them, though, till lately

*Kroll* [*nods sadly*] Yes, their scent was too much for poor Beata

*Rebecca* Their colours, too They quite bewildered her—

*Kroll* I remember, I remember [*In a lighter tone*] Well, how are things going out here?

*Rebecca* Oh, everything is going its quiet, jog-trot way One day is just like another—And with you? Your wife—?

*Kroll* Ah, my dear Miss West, don't let us talk about my affairs There is always something or other amiss in a family, especially in times like these

*Rebecca* [*after a pause, sitting down in an easy-chair beside the sofa*] How is it you haven't once been near us during the whole of the holidays?

*Kroll* Oh, it doesn't do to make oneself a nuisance—

*Rebecca* If you knew how we have missed you—

*Kroll* And then I have been away—

*Rebecca* Yes, for the last week or two We have heard of you at political meetings

*Kroll* [*nods*] Yes what do you say to that? Did you think I would turn political agitator in my old age, eh?

*Rebecca* [*smiling*] Well, you have always been a bit of an agitator, Rector Kroll

*Kroll* Why, yes, just for my private

amusement But henceforth it is to be no laughing matter, I can tell you—Do you ever see those radical newspapers?

*Rebecca* Well yes, my dear Rector, I can't deny that—

*Kroll* My dear Miss West, I have nothing to say against it—nothing in your case

*Rebecca* No, surely not One likes to know what's going on—to keep up with the time—

*Kroll* And of course I should not think of expecting you, as a woman, to side actively with either party in the civil contest—I might almost say the civil war—that is raging among us—But you have seen then, I suppose, how these gentlemen of "the people" have been pleased to treat me? What infamous abuse they have had the audacity to heap on me?

*Rebecca* Yes, but it seems to me you gave as good as you got

*Kroll* So I did, though I say it that shouldn't For now I have tasted blood, and they shall soon find to their cost that I am not the man to turn the other cheek— [*Breaks off*] But come come—don't let us get upon that subject this evening—it's too painful and irritating

*Rebecca* Oh no, don't let us talk of it

*Kroll* Tell me now—how do you get on at Rosmersholm, now that you are alone? Since our poor Beata—

*Rebecca* Thank you, I get on very well Of course one feels a great blank in many ways—a great sorrow and longing But otherwise—

*Kroll* And do you think of remaining here?—permanently, I mean

*Rebecca* My dear Rector, I really haven't thought about it, one way or the other I have got so used to the place now, that I feel almost as if I belonged to it

*Kroll* Why, of course you belong to it

*Rebecca* And so long as Mr Rosmer finds that I am of any use or comfort to him—why, so long, I suppose, I shall stay here

*Kroll* [*looks at her with emotion*] Do you know,—it is really fine for a woman to sacrifice her whole youth to others as you have done

*Rebecca* Oh, what else should I have had to live for?

*Kroll* First, there was your untiring devotion to your paralytic and exacting foster-father—

*Rebecca* You mustn't suppose that Dr West was such a charge when we were up in Finmark It was those terrible boat-voyages up there that broke him down But after we came here—well, yes, the two years before he found rest were certainly hard enough

*Kroll* And the years that followed—were they not even harder for you?

*Rebecca* Oh, how can you say such a thing? When I was so fond of Beata—and when she, poor dear, stood so sadly in need of care and forbearance

*Kroll* How good it is of you to think of her with so much kindness!

*Rebecca* [*moves a little nearer*] My dear Rector, you say that with such a ring of sincerity that I cannot think there is any ill-feeling lurking in the background

*Kroll* Ill-feeling? Why, what do you mean?

*Rebecca* Well, it would be only natural if you felt it painful to see a stranger managing the household here at Rosmersholm

*Kroll* Why, how on earth—!

*Rebecca* But you have no such feeling? [*Takes his hand*] Thanks, my dear Rector, thank you again and again

*Kroll* How on earth did you get such an idea into your head?

*Rebecca* I began to be a little afraid when your visits became so rare

*Kroll* Then you have been on a totally wrong scent, Miss West Besides—after all, there has been no essential change Even while poor Beata was alive—in her last unhappy days—it was you, and you alone, that managed everything

*Rebecca* That was only a sort of regency in Beata's name

*Kroll* Be that as it may— Do you know, Miss West—for my part, I should have no objection whatever if you— But I suppose I mustn't say such a thing

*Rebecca* What must you not say?

*Kroll* If matters were to shape so that you took the empty place—

*Rebecca* I have the only place I want, Rector

*Kroll* In fact, yes, but not in—

*Rebecca* [*interrupting gravely*] For shame, Rector Kroll How can you joke about such things?

*Kroll* Oh, well, our good Johannes Rosmer very likely thinks he has had more

than enough of married life already But nevertheless—

*Rebecca* You are really too absurd, Rector

*Kroll* Nevertheless— Tell me, Miss West—if you will forgive the question—what is your age?

*Rebecca* I'm sorry to say I am over nine-and-twenty, Rector, I am in my thirtieth year

*Kroll* Indeed And Rosmer—how old is he? Let me see he is five years younger than I am, so that makes him well over forty-three I think it would be most suitable

*Rebecca* [*rises*] Of course, of course, most suitable—Will you stay to supper this evening?

*Kroll* Yes, many thanks, I thought of staying There is a matter I want to discuss with our good friend—And I suppose, Miss West, in case you should take fancies into your head again, I had better come out pretty often for the future—as I used to in the old days

*Rebecca* Oh, yes, do—do [*Shakes both his hands*] Many thanks—how kind and good you are!

*Kroll* [*gruffly*] Am I? Well, that's not what they tell me at home

[JOHANNES ROSMER *enters by the door on the right*]

*Rebecca* Mr Rosmer, do you see who is here?

*Johannes Rosmer* Madam Helseth told me [*Rector Kroll has risen*]

*Rosmer* [*gently and softly, pressing his hands*] Welcome back to this house, my dear Kroll [*Lays his hands on Kroll's shoulders and looks into his eyes*] My dear old friend! I knew that sooner or later things would come all right between us

*Kroll* Why, my dear fellow—do you mean to say you too have been so foolish as to fancy there was anything wrong?

*Rebecca* [*to ROSMER*] Yes, only think,—it was nothing but fancy after all!

*Rosmer* Is that really the case, Kroll? Then why did you desert us so entirely?

*Kroll* [*gravely, in a low voice*] Because my presence would always have been reminding you of the years of your happiness, and of—the life that ended in the mill-race

*Rosmer* Well, it was a kind thought—you were always considerate But it was quite unnecessary to remain away on that

account—Come, sit here on the sofa [*They sit down*] No, I assure you, the thought of Beata has no pain for me We speak of her every day We feel almost as if she were still one of the household

*Kroll* Do you really?

*Rebecca* [*lighting the lamp*]. Yes, indeed we do

*Rosmer* It is quite natural We were both so deeply attached to her And both Rebec—both Miss West and I know that we did all that was possible for her in her affliction We have nothing to reproach ourselves with—So I feel nothing but a tranquil tenderness now at the thought of Beata

*Kroll* You dear, good people! Henceforward, I declare I shall come out and see you every day

*Rebecca* [*seats herself in an armchair*]. Mind, we shall expect you to keep your word

*Rosmer* [*with some hesitation*] My dear Kroll—I wish very much that our intercourse had never been interrupted Ever since we have known each other, you have seemed predestined to be my adviser—ever since I went to the University

*Kroll* Yes, and I have always been proud of the office But is there anything particular just now—?

*Rosmer* There are many things that I would give a great deal to talk over with you, quite frankly—straight from the heart

*Rebecca* Ah yes, Mr Rosmer—that must be such a comfort—between old friends—

*Kroll* Oh I can tell you I have still more to talk to you about I suppose you know I have turned a militant politician?

*Rosmer* Yes, so you have How did that come about?

*Kroll* I was forced into it in spite of myself It is impossible to stand idly looking on any longer Now that the Radicals have unhappily come into power, it is high time something should be done,—so I have got our little group of friends in the town to close up their ranks I tell you it is high time!

*Rebecca* [*with a faint smile*] Don't you think it may even be a little late?

*Kroll* Unquestionably it would have been better if we had checked the stream at an earlier point in its course But who could foresee what was going to happen? Certainly not I [*Rises and walks up and*

*down*] But now I have had my eyes opened once for all, for now the spirit of revolt has crept into the school itself

*Rosmer* Into the school? Surely not into your school?

*Kroll* I tell you it has—into my own school What do you think? It has come to my knowledge that the sixth form boys—a number of them at any rate—have been keeping up a secret society for over six months, and they take in Mortensgård's paper!

*Rebecca* The "Beacon"?

*Kroll* Yes, nice mental sustenance for future government officials, is it not? But the worst of it is that it's all the cleverest boys in the form that have banded together in this conspiracy against me Only the dunces at the bottom of the class have kept out of it

*Rebecca* Do you take this so very much to heart, Rector?

*Kroll* Do I take it to heart! To be so thwarted and opposed in the work of my whole life! [*Lower*] But I could almost say I don't care about the school—for there is worse behind [*Looks around*] I suppose no one can hear us?

*Rebecca* Oh, no, of course not

*Kroll* Well, then, I must tell you that dissension and revolt have crept into my own house—into my own quiet home They have destroyed the peace of my family life

*Rosmer* [*rises*] What! Into your own house—?

*Rebecca* [*goes over to the Rector*] My dear Rector, what has happened?

*Kroll* Would you believe that my own children— In short, it is Laurits that is the ringleader of the school conspiracy, and Hilda has embroidered a red portfolio to keep the "Beacon" in

*Rosmer* I should certainly never have dreamt that, in your own house—

*Kroll* No, who would have dreamt of such a thing? In my house, the very home of obedience and order—where one will, and one only, has always prevailed—

*Rebecca* How does your wife take all this?

*Kroll* Why, that is the most incredible part of it My wife, who all her life long has shared my opinions and concurred in my views, both in great things and small—she is actually inclined to side with the chil-

dren on many points And she blames me for what has happened She says I tyrannise over the children As if it weren't necessary to— Well, you see how my house is divided against itself But of course I say as little about it as possible Such things are best kept quiet [*Wanders up the room*] Ah, well, well, well

[*Stands at the window with his hands behind his back and looks out*]

Rebecca [*comes up close to ROSMER and says rapidly and in a low voice, so that the Rector does not hear her*] Do it now!

Rosmer [*also in a low voice*] Not this evening

Rebecca [*as before*] Yes, just this evening

[*Goes to the table and busies herself with the lamp*]

Kroll [*comes forward*] Well, my dear Rosmer, now you know how the spirit of the age has overshadowed both my domestic and my official life And am I to refrain from combating this pernicious, subversive, anarchic spirit, with any weapons I can lay my hands on? Fight it I will, trust me for that, both with tongue and pen

Rosmer Have you any hope of stemming the tide in that way?

Kroll At any rate, I shall have done my duty as a citizen in defence of the State And I hold it the duty of every right-minded man with an atom of patriotism to do likewise In fact—that was my principal reason for coming out here this evening

Rosmer Why, my dear Kroll, what do you mean—? What can I—?

Kroll You can stand by your old friends Do as we do Lend a hand, with all your might

Rebecca But, Rector Kroll, you know Mr Rosmer's distaste for public life

Kroll He must get over his distaste— You don't keep abreast of things, Rosmer You bury yourself alive here, with your historical collections Far be it from me to speak disrespectfully of family trees, and so forth, but, unfortunately, this is no time for hobbies of that sort You cannot imagine the state things are in, all over the country There is hardly a single accepted idea that hasn't been turned topsy-turvy It will be a gigantic task to get all the errors rooted out again

Rosmer I have no doubt of it But I am the last man to undertake such a task

Rebecca And besides, I think Mr Rosmer has come to take a wider view of life than he used to

Kroll [*with surprise*] Wider?

Rebecca Yes, or freer, if you like—less one-sided

Kroll What is the meaning of this? Rosmer—surely you are not so weak as to be influenced by the accident that the leaders of the mob have won a temporary advantage?

Rosmer My dear Kroll, you know how little I understand of politics But I confess it seems to me that within the last few years people are beginning to show greater independence of thought

Kroll Indeed! And you take it for granted that that must be an improvement! But in any case you are quite mistaken, my friend Just inquire a little into the opinions that are current among the Radicals, both out here and in the town They are neither more nor less than the wisdom that's retailed in the "Beacon"

Rebecca Yes, Mortensgård has great influence over many people hereabouts

Kroll Yes, just think of it! A man of his foul antecedents—a creature that was turned out of his place as a schoolmaster on account on his immoral life! A fellow like that sets himself up as a leader of the people! And succeeds too! Actually succeeds! I hear he is going to enlarge his paper I know on good authority that he is on the lookout for a capable assistant

Rebecca I wonder that you and your friends don't set up an opposition to him

Kroll That is the very thing we are going to do We have to-day bought the "County News", there was no difficulty about the money question But— [*Turns to ROSMER*] Now I come to my real errand The difficulty lies in the conduct of the paper—the editing— Tell me, Rosmer,—don't you feel it your duty to undertake it, for the sake of the good cause?

Rosmer [*almost in consternation*] I?

Rebecca Oh, how can you think of such a thing?

Kroll I can quite understand your horror of public meetings, and your reluctance to expose yourself to their tender mercies But an editor's work is less conspicuous, or rather—

Rosmer No, no, my dear friend, you must not ask me to do this

*Kroll* I should be quite willing to try my own hand at that style of work too, but I couldn't possibly manage it. I have such a multitude of irons in the fire already. But for you, with no profession to tie you down—Of course the rest of us would give you as much help as we could.

*Rosmer* I cannot, *Kroll*. I am not fitted for it.

*Kroll* Not fitted? You said the same thing when your father preferred you to the living here—

*Rosmer* And I was right. That was why I resigned it.

*Kroll* Oh, if only you are as good an editor as you were a clergyman, we shall not complain.

*Rosmer* My dear *Kroll*—I tell you once for all—I cannot do it.

*Kroll* Well, at any rate, you will lend us your name.

*Rosmer* My name?

*Kroll* Yes, the mere name, *Johannes Rosmer*, will be a great thing for the paper. We others are looked upon as confirmed partisans—indeed I hear I am denounced as a desperate fanatic—so that if we work the paper in our own names, we can't reckon upon its making much way among the misguided masses. You, on the contrary, have always kept out of the fight. Everybody knows and values your humanity and uprightness—your delicacy of mind—your unimpeachable honour. And then the prestige of your former position as a clergyman still clings to you, and, to crown all, you have your grand old family name!

*Rosmer* Oh, my name—

*Kroll* [points to the portraits] *Rosmers* of *Rosmersholm*—clergymen and soldiers, government officials of high place and trust, gentlemen to the finger-tips, every man of them—a family that for nearly two centuries has held its place as the first in the district. [Lays his hand on *ROSMER's* shoulder] *Rosmer*—you owe it to yourself and to the traditions of your race to take your share in guarding all that has hitherto been held sacred in our society. [Turns round] What do you say, Miss West?

*Rebecca* [laughing softly, as if to herself] My dear Rector—I can't tell you how ludicrous all this seems to me.

*Kroll* What do you say? Ludicrous?

*Rebecca* Yes, ludicrous. For you must let me tell you frankly—

*Rosmer* [quickly] No, no—be quiet! Not just now!

*Kroll* [looks from one to the other] My dear friends, what on earth—? [Interrupting himself] H'm

[*MADAM HELSETH* appears in the doorway on the right]

*Madam Helseth* There's a man out in the kitchen passage that says he wants to see the Pastor.

*Rosmer* [relieved] Ah, very well. Ask him to come in.

*Madam Helseth* Into the sitting-room?

*Rosmer* Yes, of course.

*Madam Helseth* But he looks scarcely the sort of man to bring into the sitting-room.

*Rebecca* Why, what does he look like, *Madam Helseth*?

*Madam Helseth* Well, he's not much to look at, Miss, and that's a fact.

*Rosmer* Did he not give his name?

*Madam Helseth* Yes—I think he said his name was *Hekman* or something of the sort.

*Rosmer* I know nobody of that name.

*Madam Helseth* And then he said he was called *Uldric*, too.

*Rosmer* [in surprise] *Ulric Hetman*! Was that it?

*Madam Helseth* Yes, so it was—*Hetman*.

*Kroll* I've surely heard that name before—

*Rebecca* Wasn't that the name he used to write under—that strange being—

*Rosmer* [to *Kroll*] It is *Ulric Brendel's* pseudonym.

*Kroll* That black sheep *Ulric Brendel's*—of course it is.

*Rebecca* Then he is still alive.

*Rosmer* I heard he had joined a company of strolling players.

*Kroll* When last I heard of him, he was in the House of Correction.

*Rosmer* Ask him to come in, *Madam Helseth*.

*Madam Helseth* Oh, very well.

[She goes out]

*Kroll* Are you really going to let a man like that into your house?

*Rosmer* You know he was once my tutor.

*Kroll* Yes, I know he went and crammed your head full of revolutionary ideas, until your father showed him the door—with his horsewhip.

Rosmer [*with a touch of bitterness*] Father was a martinet at home as well as in his regiment

Kroll Thank him in his grave for that, my dear Rosmer—Well!

[MADAM HELSETH opens the door on the right for ULRIC BRENDL and then withdraws, shutting the door behind him He is a handsome man, with grey hair and beard, somewhat gaunt, but active and well set up He is dressed like a common tramp, threadbare frock-coat, worn-out shoes, no shirt visible He wears an old pair of black gloves, and carries a soft, greasy felt hat under his arm, and a walking-stick in his hand]

Ulric Brendel [*Hesitates at first, then goes quickly up to the Rector, and holds out his hand*] Good evening, Johannes!

Kroll Excuse me—

Brendel Did you expect to see me again? And within these hated walls, too?

Kroll Excuse me— [*Pointing*] There—

Brendel [*turns*] Right There he is Johannes—my boy—my best-beloved—!

Rosmer [*takes his hand*] My old teacher

Brendel Notwithstanding certain painful memories, I could not pass by Rosmersholm without paying you a flying visit

Rosmer You are heartily welcome here now Be sure of that

Brendel Ah, this charming lady—?

[*Bows*] Mrs Rosmer, of course

Rosmer Miss West

Brendel A near relation, no doubt And yonder unknown—? A brother of the cloth, I see

Rosmer Rector Kroll

Brendel Kroll? Kroll? Wait a bit?—Weren't you a student of philology in your young days?

Kroll Of course I was

Brendel Why *Donnerwetter*, then I knew you!

Kroll Pardon me—

Brendel Weren't you—

Kroll Pardon me—

Brendel —one of those myrmidons of morality that got me turned out of the Debating Club?

Kroll Very likely But I disclaim any closer acquaintanceship

Brendel Well, well! *Nach Beheben*, Herr Doctor It's all one to me Ulric

Brendel remains the man he is for all that  
Rebecca You are on your way into town, Mr Brendel?

Brendel You have hit it, gracious lady At certain intervals, I am constrained to strike a blow for existence It goes against the grain, but—*enfin*—imperious necessity—

Rosmer Oh, but, my dear Mr Brendel, you must allow me to help you In one way or another, I am sure—

Brendel Ha, such a proposal to me! Would you desecrate the bond that unites us? Never, Johannes, never!

Rosmer But what do you think of doing in town? Believe me, you won't find it easy to—

Brendel Leave that to me, my boy The die is cast Simple as I stand here before you, I am engaged in a comprehensive campaign—more comprehensive than all my previous excursions put together [*To Rector KROLL*] Dare I ask the Herr Professor—*unter uns*—have you a tolerably decent, reputable, and commodious Public Hall in your estimable city?

Kroll The hall of the Workmen's Society is the largest

Brendel And has the Herr Professor any official influence in this doubtless most beneficent Society?

Kroll I have nothing to do with it

Rebecca [*to BRENDL*] You should apply to Peter Mortensgård

Brendel Pardon, madame—what sort of an idiot is he?

Rosmer What makes you take him for an idiot?

Brendel Can't I tell at once by the name that it belongs to a plebeian?

Kroll I did not expect that answer

Brendel But I will conquer my reluctance There is no alternative When a man stands—as I do—at a turning-point in his career— It is settled I will approach this individual—will open personal negotiations—

Rosmer Are you really and seriously standing at a turning-point?

Brendel Surely my own boy knows that, stand he where he may, Ulric Brendel always stands really and seriously—Yes, Johannes, I am going to put on a new man—to throw off the modest reserve I have hitherto maintained—

Rosmer How—?

*Brendel* I am about to take hold of life with a strong hand, to step forth, to assert myself We live in a tempestuous, an equinoctial age—I am about to lay my mite on the altar of Emancipation

*Kroll* You, too?

*Brendel* [to them all] Is the local public at all familiar with my occasional writings?

*Kroll* No, I must candidly confess that—

*Rebecca* I have read several of them My adopted father had them in his library

*Brendel* Fair lady, then you have wasted your time For, let me tell you, they are so much rubbish

*Rebecca* Indeed!

*Brendel* What you have read, yes My really important works no man or woman knows No one—except myself

*Rebecca* How does that happen?

*Brendel* Because they are not written

*Rosmer* But, my dear Mr Brendel—

*Brendel* You know, my Johannes, that I am a bit of a Sybarite—a *Feinschmecker* I have been so all my days I like to take my pleasures in solitude, for then I enjoy them doubly—tenfold So, you see when golden dreams descended and enwrapped me—when new, dizzy, far-reaching thoughts were born in me and wafted me aloft on their sustaining pinions—I bodied them forth in poems, visions, pictures—in the rough, as it were, you understand

*Rosmer* Yes, yes

*Brendel* Oh, what pleasures, what intoxications I have enjoyed in my time! The mysterious bliss of creation—in the rough, as I said—applause, gratitude, renown, the wreath of bays—all these I have garnered with full hands quivering with joy I have sated myself, in my secret thoughts, with a rapture—oh! so intense, so inebriating—!

*Kroll* H'm

*Rosmer* But you have written nothing down?

*Brendel* Not a word The soulless toil of the scrivener has always aroused a sickening aversion in me And besides, why should I profane my own ideals, when I could enjoy them in their purity by myself? But now they shall be offered up I assure you I feel like a mother who delivers her tender daughters into their bridegrooms' arms But I will offer them up, nonetheless I will sacrifice them on the altar of Emanci-

pation A series of carefully elaborated lectures—over the whole country—!

*Rebecca* [with animation] This is noble of you, Mr Brendel! You are yielding up the dearest thing you possess

*Rosmer* The only thing

*Rebecca* [looking significantly at Rosmer] How many are there who do as much—who dare do as much?

*Rosmer* [returning the look] Who knows?

*Brendel* My audience is touched That does my heart good—and steels my will So now I will proceed to action Stay—one thing more [To the Rector] Can you tell me, Herr Preceptor,—is there such a thing as a Temperance Society in the town? A Total Abstinence Society? I need scarcely ask

*Kroll* Yes, there is I am the president, at your service

*Brendel* I saw it in your face! Well, it is by no means impossible that I may come to you and enrol myself as a member for a week

*Kroll* Excuse me—we don't receive members by the week

*Brendel* *A la bonne heure*, Herr Pedagogue Ulric Brendel has never forced himself into that sort of Society [Turns] But I must not prolong my stay in this house, so rich in memories I must get on to the town and select a suitable lodging I presume there is a decent hotel in the place

*Rebecca* Mayn't I offer you anything before you go?

*Brendel* Of what sort, gracious lady?

*Rebecca* A cup of tea, or—

*Brendel* I thank my bountiful hostess—but I am always loath to trespass on private hospitality [Waves his hand] Farewell, gentlefolks all! [Goes towards the door, but turns again] Oh, by the way—Johannes—Pastor Rosmer—for the sake of our ancient friendship, will you do your former teacher a service?

*Rosmer* Yes, with all my heart

*Brendel* Good Then lend me—for a day or two—a starched shirt—with cuffs

*Rosmer* Nothing else?

*Brendel* For you see I am travelling on foot—at present My trunk is being sent after me

*Rosmer* Quite so But is there nothing else?



Brendel Well, do you know—perhaps you could spare me an oldish, well-worn summer overcoat

Rosmer Yes, yes, certainly I can

Brendel And if a respectable pair of boots happened to go along with the coat—

Rosmer That we can manage, too. As soon as you let us know your address, we will send the things in.

Brendel Not on any account. Pray do not let me give you any trouble! I will take the bagatelles with me.

*Rosiner* As you please Come upstairs  
with me then

Rebecca Let me go Madam Helseth  
and I will see to it

Brendel I cannot think of suffering this distinguished lady to—

Rebecca Oh, nonsense! Come along,  
Mr Brendel

[She goes out to the right]

Rosmer [detaining him] Tell me—is there nothing else I can do for you?

*Brundel* Upon my word, I know of nothing more. Well, yes, damn it all—now that I think of it—I! Johannes, do you happen to have eight crowns in your pocket?

Rosmer Let me see [Opens his purse]  
Here are two ten-crown notes

Brendel Well, well, never mind! I can take them I can always get them changed in the town Thanks in the meantime Remember it was two tenners you lent me Good-night my own dear boy Good-night, respected Sir

[Goes out to the right ROSMER takes leave of him, and shuts the door behind him]

Kroll Merciful Heaven—so that is the  
the Brendel people once expected such  
good things of

Roemer (quietly) At least he has had the courage to live his life his own way. I don't think that is such a small matter either.

Karl: What? A life like his? I almost  
love to have it in him to turn your head  
as a

My mind is quite clear

I wish I could believe it my dear  
You are so terribly impression-

1. The first step is to identify the problem. It is not enough to simply state the problem; you must also identify the specific aspects of the problem that you are trying to solve.

**Kroll** Yes, let us

[They seat themselves on the sofa]

Rosmer [after a slight pause] Don't you think we lead a pleasant and comfortable life here?

Kroll Yes, your life is pleasant and comfortable now—and peaceful You have found yourself a home, Rosmer And I have lost mine

Rosmer My dear friend, don't say that  
The wound will heal again in time

*Kroll* Never, never The barb will always rankle Things can never be as they were

*Rosmer* Listen to me, Kroll We have been fast friends for many and many a year Does it seem to you conceivable that our friendship should ever go to wreck?

*Kroll* I know of nothing in the world that could estrange us. What puts that into your head?

*Rosmer* You attach such paramount importance to uniformity of opinions and views

*Kroll* No doubt, but we two are in practical agreement, at any rate, on the great essential questions

Rosmer [in a low voice] No, not now

Kroll [tries to spring up] What is this?

Rosmer [holding him] No, you must sit still—I entreat you, Kroll

Kroll What can this mean? I don't understand you Speak plainly

Rosmer A new summer has blossomed  
in my soul I see with eyes grown young  
again And so now I stand—

Kroll Where—where, Rosmer?

**Rosmer** Where your children stand

Kroll You? You! Impossible! Where do you say you stand?

Rosmer On the same side as Laurits and Hilda

*Kroll [bows his head]* An apostate!  
Johannes Rosmer an apostate!

Rosmer I should have felt so happy—so intensely happy in what you call my apostasy. But, nevertheless, I suffered deeply, for I knew it would be a bitter sorrow to you.

Kroll Rosmer—Rosmer! I shall never get over this! [*Looks gloomily at him*] To think that you too can find it in your heart to help on the work of corruption and ruin in this wretched land!

Reverend It is the will of conscription  
I wish to help on



*Kroll* Oh, yes, I know That is what both the tempters and their victims call it But do you think there is any emancipation to be expected from the spirit that is now poisoning our social life?

*Rosmer* I am not in love with the spirit that is in the ascendant, nor with either of the contending parties I will try to bring together men from both sides—as many as I can—and to unite them as closely as possible I will devote my life and all my energies to this one thing—the creation of a true democracy in this country

*Kroll* So you don't think we have democracy enough already! For my part it seems to me we are all in a fair way to be dragged down into the mire, where hitherto only the mob have been able to thrive

*Rosmer* That is just why I want to awaken the democracy to its true task

*Kroll* What task?

*Rosmer* That of making all the people of this country noble—

*Kroll* All the people—?

*Rosmer* As many as possible, at any rate

*Kroll* By what means?

*Rosmer* By freeing their minds and purifying their wills

*Kroll* You are a dreamer, Rosmer Will you free them? Will you purify them?

*Rosmer* No, my dear friend—I will only try to arouse them to their task They themselves must accomplish it

*Kroll* And you think they can?

*Rosmer* Yes

*Kroll* By their own strength?

*Rosmer* Yes, precisely by their own strength There is no other

*Kroll* [rises] Is this becoming language for a priest?

*Rosmer* I am no longer a priest

*Kroll* Well but—the faith of your fathers—?

*Rosmer* It is mine no more

*Kroll* No more—!

*Rosmer* [rises] I have given it up I had to give it up, Kroll

*Kroll* [controlling his agitation] Oh, indeed— Yes, yes, yes I suppose one thing goes with another Was this, then, your reason for leaving the Church?

*Rosmer* Yes As soon as my mind was clear—as soon as I was quite certain that this was no passing attack of scepticism, but

a conviction I neither could nor would shake off—then I at once left the Church

*Kroll* So this has been your state of mind all this time! And we—your friends—have heard nothing of it Rosmer—Rosmer—how could you hide the miserable truth from us!

*Rosmer* Because it seemed to me a matter that concerned myself alone And besides, I did not wish to give you and my other friends any needless pain I thought I might live on here, as before, quietly, serenely, happily I wanted to read, to bury myself in all the studies that until then had been sealed books to me I wanted to make myself thoroughly at home in the great world of truth and freedom that has been revealed to me

*Kroll* Apostate! Every word proves it But why, then, do you confess your secret apostasy after all? And why just at this time?

*Rosmer* You yourself have driven me to it, Kroll

*Kroll* I? Have I driven you—?

*Rosmer* When I heard of your violence on the platform—when I read all the rancorous speeches you made—your bitter onslaughts on your opponents—the contemptuous invectives you heaped on them—oh, Kroll, to think that you—you—could come to this!—then my duty stood imperatively before me Men are growing evil in this struggle Peace and joy and mutual forbearance must once more enter into our souls That is why I now intend to step forward and openly avow myself for what I am I, too, will try my strength Could not you—from your side—help me in this, Kroll?

*Kroll* Never so long as I live will I make peace with the subversive forces in society

*Rosmer* Then at least let us fight with honourable weapons—since fight we must

*Kroll* Whoever is not with me in the essential things of life, him I no longer know I owe him no consideration

*Rosmer* Does that apply to me, too?

*Kroll* It is you that have broken with me, Rosmer

*Rosmer* Is this a breach then?

*Kroll* This! It is a breach with all who have hitherto been your friends You must take the consequences

[REBECCA WEST enters from the right, and opens the door wide]

Rebecca There now, he is on his way to his great sacrifice And now we can go to supper Will you come in, Rector?

Kroll [*takes up his hat*] Good-night, Mrs West I have nothing more to do here

Rebecca [*eagerly*] What is this? [*Shuts the door and comes forward*] Have you spoken?

Rosmer He knows everything

Kroll We will not let you go, Rosmer We will force you to come back to us

Rosmer I can never stand where I did

Kroll We shall see You are not the man to endure standing alone

Rosmer I shall not be so completely alone after all—There are two of us to bear the loneliness together

Kroll Ah— [*A suspicion appears in his face*] That too! Beata's words—

Rosmer Beata's—?

Kroll [*shaking off the thought*] No, no—that was vile Forgive me

Rosmer What? What do you mean?

Kroll Don't ask Bah! Forgive me! Good-bye!

[*Goes towards the entrance door*]

Rosmer [*follows him*] Kroll! Our friendship must not end like this I will come and see you to-morrow

Kroll [*in the hall, turns*] You shall never cross my threshold again

[*He takes up his stick and goes out*]

[*Rosmer stands for a moment in the doorway, then shuts the door and walks up to the table*]

Rosmer It does not matter, Rebecca We will see it out, we two faithful friends—you and I

Rebecca What do you think he meant when he said "That was vile"?

Rosmer Don't trouble about that, dear He himself didn't believe what was in his mind To-morrow I will go and see him Good-night!

Rebecca Are you going upstairs so early to-night? After this?

Rosmer To-night as usual I feel so relieved now it is over You see—I am a married man Rebecca Do you, too, take it cool? Good-night!

Rebecca Good-night dear friend! Sleep well!

[*Rebecca goes to the door and looks out*]

[*ROSMER goes out by the hall door, his steps are heard ascending the staircase*]

[*REBECCA goes and pulls a bell-rope near the stove Shortly after, MADAM HELSETH enters from the right*]

Rebecca You can take away the supper things, Madam Helseth Mr Rosmer doesn't want anything, and the Rector has gone home

Madam Helseth Has the Rector gone? What was the matter with him?

Rebecca [*takes up her crochet work*] He said he thought there was a heavy storm brewing—

Madam Helseth What a strange notion! There's not a cloud in the sky this evening

Rebecca Let us hope he mayn't meet the White Horse! I'm afraid we shall soon be hearing something from the bogies now

Madam Helseth Lord forgive you, Miss! Don't say such awful things

Rebecca Well, well, well—

Madam Helseth [*softly*] Do you really think some one is to go soon, Miss?

Rebecca No, why should I think so? But there are so many sorts of white horses in this world, Madam Helseth—Well good-night I shall go to my room now

Madam Helseth Good-night, Miss

[*REBECCA goes out to the right, with her crochet work*]

Madam Helseth [*turns the lamp down, shaking her head and muttering to herself*] Lord—Lord! That Miss West! The things she does say!

## ACT TWO

JOHANNES ROSMER'S study Entrance door on the left At the back a doorway with a curtain drawn aside leading into ROSMER'S bedroom On the right a window, and in front of it a writing-table covered with books and papers Book-shelves and cases round the room The furniture is simple On the left an old-fashioned sofa, with a table in front of it

JOHANNES ROSMER in an indoor jacket, is sitting in a high-backed chair at the writing-table He is sitting and turning over the leaves of a pamphlet and reading a letter here and there

There is a small table near the door on the left Rosmer [*to himself*] Come in

*Rebecca West* [enters, dressed in a morning gown] Good morning

*Rosmer* [turning the leaves of the pamphlet] Good morning, dear Do you want anything?

*Rebecca* I only wanted to hear if you had slept well

*Rosmer* Oh, I have had a beautiful, peaceful night [Turns] And you?

*Rebecca* Oh, yes, thanks—towards morning—

*Rosmer* I don't know when I have felt so light-hearted as I do now I am so glad I managed to speak out at last

*Rebecca* Yes, it is a pity you remained silent so long, Rosmer

*Rosmer* I don't understand myself how I could be such a coward

*Rebecca* It wasn't precisely cowardice—

*Rosmer* Oh, yes, dear—when I think the thing out, I can see there was a touch of cowardice at the bottom of it

*Rebecca* All the braver, then, to make the plunge at last [Sits on a chair at the writing-table, close to him] But now I want to tell you of something I have done—and you mustn't be vexed with me about it

*Rosmer* Vexed? How can you think—?

*Rebecca* Well, it was perhaps rather indiscreet of me but—

*Rosmer* Let me hear what it was

*Rebecca* Yesterday evening, when Ulric Brendel was leaving—I gave him a note to Peter Mortensgård

*Rosmer* [a little doubtful] Why, my dear Rebecca— Well, what did you say?

*Rebecca* I said that he would be doing you a service if he would look after that unfortunate creature a little, and help him in any way he could

*Rosmer* Dear, you shouldn't have done that You have only done Brendel harm And Mortensgård is not a man I care to have anything to do with You know of that old episode between us

*Rebecca* But don't you think it would be as well to make it up with him again?

*Rosmer* I? With Mortensgård? In what way do you mean?

*Rebecca* Well, you know you can't feel absolutely secure now—after this breach with your old friends

*Rosmer* [looks at her and shakes his

head] Can you really believe that Kroll or any of the others would try to take revenge on me? That they would be capable of—?

*Rebecca* In the first heat of anger, dear— No one can be sure I think—after the way the Rector took it—

*Rosmer* Oh, you ought surely to know him better than that Kroll is a gentleman to the backbone I am going into town this afternoon to talk to him I will talk to them all Oh, you shall see how easily it will all go—

[MADAM HELSETH appears at the door on the left]

*Rebecca* [rises] What is it, Madam Helseth?

*Madam Helseth* Rector Kroll is downstairs in the hall

*Rosmer* [rises hastily] Kroll!

*Rebecca* The Rector! Is it possible—

*Madam Helseth* He wants to know if he may come upstairs, Mr Rosmer

*Rosmer* [to REBECCA] What did I tell you?—Of course he may [Goes to the door and calls down the stairs] Come up, dear friend! I am delighted to see you

[ROSMER stands holding the door open

MADAM HELSETH goes out REBECCA draws the curtain before the doorway at the back and then begins arranging things in the room]

[RECTOR KROLL enters, with his hat in his hand]

*Rosmer* [with quiet emotion] I knew it couldn't be the last time—

*Kroll* I see things to-day in quite a different light from yesterday

*Rosmer* Ah, yes, Kroll, I was sure you would, now that you have had time to reflect

*Kroll* You misunderstand me completely [Lays his hat on the table beside the sofa] It is of the utmost importance that I should speak to you, alone

*Rosmer* Why may not Miss West—?

*Rebecca* No, no, Mr Rosmer I will go

*Kroll* [looks at her from head to foot]

And I must ask Miss West to excuse my coming at such an untimely hour—taking her unawares before she has had time to—

*Rebecca* [surprised] What do you mean? Do you see any harm in my wearing a morning gown about the house?

*Kroll* Heaven forbid! I know nothing

of what may now be customary at Rosmersholm

*Rosmer* Why, Kroll—you are not yourself to-day!

*Rebecca* Allow me to wish you good morning, Rector Kroll

[*She goes out to the left*]

*Kroll* By your leave—

[*Sits on the sofa*]

*Rosmer* Yes, Kroll, sit down, and let us talk things out amicably

[*He seats himself in a chair directly opposite to the Rector*]

*Kroll* I haven't closed an eye since yesterday I have been lying thinking and thinking all night

*Rosmer* And what do you say to things to-day?

*Kroll* It will be a long story, Rosmer Let me begin with a sort of introduction I can give you news of Ulric Brendel

*Rosmer* Has he called on you?

*Kroll* No He took up his quarters in a low public-house—in the lowest company of course—and drank and stood treat as long as he had any money Then he began abusing the whole company as a set of disreputable blackguards—and so far he was quite right—whereupon they thrashed him and pitched him out into the gutter

*Rosmer* So he is incorrigible after all

*Kroll* He had pawned the coat, too, but I am told that has been redeemed for him Can you guess by whom?

*Rosmer* Perhaps by you?

*Kroll* No, by the distinguished Mr Mortensgård

*Rosmer* Ah, indeed

*Kroll* I understand that Mr Brendel's first visit was to the "idiot" and "plebeian"

*Rosmer* Well, it was lucky for him—

*Kroll* To be sure it was [*Leans over the table towards Rosmer*] And that brings me to a matter it is my duty to warn you about, for our old—for our former friendship's sake

*Rosmer* My dear Kroll, what can that be?

*Kroll* It is this there are things going on behind your back in this house

*Rosmer* How can you think so? Is it Reb—is it Miss West you are aiming at?

*Kroll* Precisely I can quite understand it on her part She has so long been accustomed to have everything her own way here But nevertheless—

*Rosmer* My dear Kroll, you are utterly mistaken She and I—we have no concealments from each other on any subject whatever

*Kroll* Has she told you, then, that she has entered into correspondence with the editor of the "Beacon"?

*Rosmer* Oh, you are thinking of the few lines she sent by Ulric Brendel?

*Kroll* Then you have found it out And do you approve of her entering into relations with a scurrilous scribbler, who never lets a week pass without holding me up to ridicule, both as a schoolmaster and as a public man?

*Rosmer* My dear Kroll, I don't suppose that side of the matter ever entered her head And besides, of course she has full liberty of action, just as I have

*Kroll* Indeed? Ah, no doubt that follows from your new line of thought For Miss West presumably shares your present standpoint?

*Rosmer* Yes, she does We two have worked our way forward in faithful comradeship

*Kroll* [*looks at him and slowly shakes his head*] Oh, you blind, deluded being!

*Rosmer* I? Why do you say that?

*Kroll* Because I dare not—I will not think the worst No no, let me say my say out—You really do value my friendship, Rosmer? And my respect too? Do you not?

*Rosmer* I surely need not answer that question

*Kroll* Well, but there are other questions that do require an answer—a full explanation on your part—Will you submit to a sort of investigation—?

*Rosmer* Investigation?

*Kroll* Yes, will you let me question you about certain things it may pain you to be reminded of? You see—this apostasy of yours—well, this emancipation, as you call it—is bound up with many other things that for your own sake you must explain to me

*Rosmer* My dear Kroll, ask what questions you please I have nothing to conceal

*Kroll* Then tell me—what do you think was the real, the ultimate reason why Beata put an end to her life?

*Rosmer* Can you have any doubt on the subject? Or, rather can you ask for

reasons for what an unhappy, irresponsible invalid may do?

*Kroll* Are you certain that Beata was completely irresponsible for her actions? The doctors, at any rate, were by no means convinced of it

*Rosmer* If the doctors had ever seen her as I have so often seen her, for days and nights together, they would have had no doubts

*Kroll* I had no doubts either—then

*Rosmer* Oh, no, unhappily, there wasn't the smallest room for doubt I have told you of her wild frenzies of passion—which she expected me to return Oh, how they appalled me! And then her causeless, consuming self-reproaches during the last few years

*Kroll* Yes, when she had learnt that she must remain childless all her life

*Rosmer* Yes, just think of that! Such terrible, haunting agony of mind about a thing utterly beyond her control—! How could you call her responsible for her actions?

*Kroll* H'm— Can you remember whether you had any books in the house at that time treating of the rationale of marriage—according to the “advanced” ideas of the day?

*Rosmer* I remember Miss West lending me a work of the kind The Doctor left her his library, you know But, my dear Kroll, you surely cannot suppose we were so reckless as to let my poor sick wife get hold of any such ideas? I can solemnly assure you that the fault was not ours It was her own distempered brain that drove her into these wild aberrations

*Kroll* One thing at any rate I can tell you, and that is, that poor, overstrung, tortured Beata put an end to her life in order that you might live happily—live freely, and—after your own heart

*Rosmer* [*starts half up from his chair*] What do you mean by that?

*Kroll* Listen to me quietly, Rosmer, for now I can speak of it In the last year of her life she came to me twice to pour forth all her anguish and despair

*Rosmer* On this same subject?

*Kroll* No The first time she came, it was to declare that you were on the road to perversion—that you were going to break with the faith of your fathers

*Rosmer* [*eagerly*] What you say is im-

possible, Kroll Absolutely impossible! You must be mistaken

*Kroll* And why?

*Rosmer* Because while Beata was alive I was still wrestling with myself in doubt And that fight I fought out alone and in utter silence I don't think even Rebecca—

*Kroll* Rebecca?

*Rosmer* Oh, well—Miss West I call her Rebecca for convenience' sake

*Kroll* So I have remarked

*Rosmer* So it is inconceivable to me how Beata could have got hold of the idea And why did she not speak to me about it? She never did—she never said a single word

*Kroll* Poor creature—she begged and implored me to talk to you

*Rosmer* And why did you not?

*Kroll* At that time I never for a moment doubted that she was out of her mind Such an accusation against a man like you!—And then she came again—about a month later This time she seemed outwardly calmer, but as she was going she said “They may soon expect the White Horse at Rosmersholm now”

*Rosmer* Yes, yes The White Horse—she often spoke of it

*Kroll* And when I tried to divert her mind from such melancholy fancies, she only answered “I have not long to live, for Johannes must marry Rebecca at once”

*Rosmer* [*almost speechless*] What do you say? I marry—?

*Kroll* That was on a Thursday afternoon— On the Saturday evening she threw herself from the bridge into the mill-race

*Rosmer* And you never warned us—!

*Kroll* You know very well how often she used to say that she felt her end was near

*Rosmer* Yes, I know But nevertheless—you should have warned us!

*Kroll* I did think of it, but not till too late

*Rosmer* But afterwards, why did you not—? Why have you said nothing about all this?

*Kroll* What good would it have done for me to come torturing and harassing you still further? I took all she said for mere wild, empty ravings—until yesterday evening

*Rosmer* Then you have now changed your opinion?

Kroll Did not Beata see quite clearly when she declared you were about to desert the faith of your fathers?

Rosmer [*looks fixedly, straight before him*] I cannot understand it. It is the most incomprehensible thing in the world.

Kroll Incomprehensible or not—there it is. And now I ask you, Rosmer,—how much truth is there in her other accusation? The last one, I mean.

Rosmer Accusation? Was that an accusation?

Kroll Perhaps you did not notice the way she worded it. She had to go, she said—why?

Rosmer In order that I might marry Rebecca—

Kroll These were not precisely her words. Beata used a different expression. She said “I have not long to live, for Johannes must marry Rebecca at once.”

Rosmer [*looks at him for a moment, then rises*] Now I understand you, Kroll.

Kroll And what then? What is your answer?

Rosmer [*still quiet and self-restrained*] To such an unheard-of—? The only fitting answer would be to point to the door.

Kroll [*rises*] Well and good.

Rosmer [*stands in front of him*] Listen to me. For more than a year—ever since Beata left us—Rebecca West and I have lived alone here at Rosmersholm. During all that time you have known of Beata's accusation against us. But I have never for a moment noticed that you disapproved of Rebecca's living in my house.

Kroll I did not know till yesterday evening that it was an unbelieving man who was living with an—emancipated woman.

Rosmer Ah—! Then you do not believe that purity of mind is to be found among the unbelieving and the emancipated? You do not believe that morality may be an instinctive law of their nature!

Kroll I have no great faith in the morality that is not founded on the teachings of the Church.

Rosmer And you mean this to apply to Rebecca and me? To the relation between us two—?

Kroll Not even out of consideration for you two can I depart from my opinion that there is no unfathomable gulf between free thought and—h'm—

Rosmer And what?

Kroll —and free love,—since you will have it.

Rosmer [*in a low voice*] And you are not ashamed to say this to me! You, who have known me from my earliest youth!

Kroll For that very reason I know how easily you are influenced by the people you associate with. And this Rebecca of yours—well, Miss West then—we really know little or nothing about her. In short, Rosmer—I will not give you up. And you—you must try to save yourself in time.

Rosmer Save myself? How—?

[MADAM HELSETH peeps in at the door on the left]

Rosmer What do you want?

Madam Helseth I wanted to ask Miss West to step downstairs.

Rosmer Miss West is not up here.

Madam Helseth Isn't she? [*Looks round the room*] Well, that's strange.

[*She goes*]

Rosmer You were saying—?

Kroll Listen to me. I am not going to inquire too closely into the secret history of what went on here in Beata's lifetime—and may still be going on. I know that your marriage was a most unhappy one, and I suppose that must be taken as some sort of excuse—

Rosmer Oh, how little you really know me—!

Kroll Don't interrupt me. What I mean is this: if your present mode of life with Miss West is to continue, it is absolutely necessary that the change of views—the unhappy backsliding—brought about by her evil influence, should be hushed up. Let me speak! Let me speak! I say, if the worst comes to the worst, in Heaven's name think and believe whatever you like about everything under the sun. But you must keep your views to yourself. These things are purely personal matters, after all. There is no need to proclaim them from the housetops.

Rosmer I feel an absolute necessity to get out of a false and equivocal position.

Kroll But you have a duty towards the traditions of your race, Rosmer! Remember that! Rosmersholm has, so to speak, radiated morality and order from time immemorial—yes and respectful conformity to all that is accepted and sanctioned by the best people. The whole district has taken its stamp from Rosmersholm. It would

lead to deplorable, irremediable confusion if it were known that you had broken with what I may call the hereditary idea of the house of Rosmer

*Rosmer* My dear Kroll, I cannot see the matter in that light I look upon it as my imperative duty to spread a little light and gladness here, where the Rosmer family has from generation to generation been a centre of darkness and oppression

*Kroll [looks at him severely]* Yes, that would be a worthy life-work for the last of your race! No, Rosmer, let such things alone, you are the last man for such a task You were born to be a quiet student

*Rosmer* Perhaps so But for once in a way I mean to bear my part in the battle of life

*Kroll* And do you know what that battle of life will mean for you? It will mean a life-and-death struggle with all your friends

*Rosmer [quietly]* They cannot all be such fanatics as you

*Kroll* You are a credulous creature, Rosmer An inexperienced creature, too You have no conception of the overwhelming storm that will burst upon you

[*MADAM HELSETH looks in at the door on the left*]

*Madam Helseth* Miss West wants to know—

*Rosmer* What is it?

*Madam Helseth* There's a man downstairs wanting to have a word with the Pastor

*Rosmer* Is it the man who was here yesterday evening?

*Madam Helseth* No, it's that Mortensgård

*Rosmer* Mortensgård?

*Kroll* Aha! So it has come to this, has it?—Already!

*Rosmer* What does he want with me? Why didn't you send him away?

*Madam Helseth* Miss West said I was to ask if he might come upstairs

*Rosmer* Tell him I'm engaged—

*Kroll [to MADAM HELSETH]* Let him come up, Madam Helseth

[*MADAM HELSETH goes*]

*Kroll [takes up his hat]* I retire from the field—for the moment But the main battle has yet to be fought

*Rosmer* On my honour, Kroll—I have nothing whatever to do with Mortensgård

*Kroll* I do not believe you On no subject and in no relation whatever will I henceforth believe you It is war to the knife now We will try whether we cannot disarm you

*Rosmer* Oh, Kroll—how low—how very low you have sunk!

*Kroll* I? And you think you have the right to say that to me! Remember Beata!

*Rosmer* Still harping upon that?

*Kroll* No You must solve the enigma of the mill-race according to your own conscience—if you have anything of the sort left

[*PETER MORTENSGÅRD enters softly and quietly from the left He is a small, wiry man with thin reddish hair and beard*]

*Kroll [with a look of hatred]* Ah, here we have the "Beacon"—burning at Rosmersholm! [*Buttons his coat*] Well, now I can no longer hesitate what course to steer

*Mortensgård [deferentially]* The "Beacon" may always be relied upon to light the Rector home

*Kroll* Yes, you have long shown your goodwill To be sure there's a commandment about bearing false witness against your neighbour—

*Mortensgård* Rector Kroll need not instruct me in the commandments

*Kroll* Not even in the seventh?

*Rosmer* Kroll—!

*Mortensgård* If I needed instruction, it would rather be the Pastor's business

*Kroll [with covert sarcasm]* The Pastor's? Oh, yes, unquestionably Pastor Rosmer is the man for that—Good luck to your conference, gentlemen!

[*Goes out and slams the door behind him*]

*Rosmer [keeps his eyes fixed on the closed door and says to himself]* Well, well—so be it then [*Turns*] Will you be good enough to tell me, Mr Mortensgård, what brings you out here to me?

*Mortensgård* It was really Miss West I came to see I wanted to thank her for the friendly note I received from her yesterday

*Rosmer* I know she wrote to you Have you seen her then?

*Mortensgård* Yes, for a short time [*Smiles slightly*] I hear there has been a certain change of views out here at Rosmersholm



Rosmer My views are altered in many respects I might almost say in all

Mortensgård So Miss West told me, and that's why she thought I had better come up and talk things over with the Pastor

Rosmer What things, Mr Mortensgård?

Mortensgård May I announce in the "Beacon" that there has been a change in your views—that you have joined the party of freedom and progress?

Rosmer Certainly you may In fact, I beg you to make the announcement

Mortensgård Then it shall appear in to-morrow's paper It will cause a great sensation when it's known that Pastor Rosmer of Rosmersholm is prepared to take up arms for the cause of light, in that sense, too

Rosmer I don't quite understand you

Mortensgård I mean that the moral position of our party is greatly strengthened whenever we gain an adherent of serious, Christian principles

Rosmer [*with some surprise*] Then you do not know—? Did not Miss West tell you that, too?

Mortensgård What, Pastor Rosmer? Miss West was in a great hurry She said I was to go upstairs and hear the rest from yourself

Rosmer Well, in that case I may tell you that I have emancipated myself entirely, and on every side I have broken with all the dogmas of the Church Henceforth they are nothing to me

Mortensgård [*looks at him in amazement*] Well—if the skies were to fall I couldn't be more—I Pastor Rosmer himself announces—

Rosmer Yes, I now stand where you have stood for many years That, too, you may announce in the "Beacon" to-morrow

Mortensgård That too? No, my dear Pastor—excuse me—I don't think it would be wise to touch on that side of the matter

Rosmer Not touch on it?

Mortensgård Not at present, I mean

Rosmer I don't understand—

Mortensgård Well, you see, Pastor Rosmer—you probably don't know the ins and outs of things so well as I do But, since you have come over to the party of freedom—and, as I hear from Miss West, you intend to take an active share in the movement—I presume you would like to be of as

much service as possible, both to the cause in general and to this particular agitation

Rosmer Yes, that is my earnest wish

Mortensgård Good But now I must tell you, Pastor Rosmer, that if you openly declare your defection from the Church, you tie your own hands at the very outset

Rosmer Do you think so?

Mortensgård Yes, believe me, you won't be able to do much for the cause, in this part of the country at any rate And besides—we have plenty of free-thinkers already, Pastor Rosmer—I might almost say too many What the party requires, is a Christian element—something that every one must respect That is what we are sadly in need of And, therefore, I advise you to keep your own counsel about what doesn't concern the public That's my view of the matter, at least

Rosmer I understand Then if I openly confess my apostasy, you dare not have anything to do with me?

Mortensgård [*shaking his head*] I scarcely like to risk it, Pastor Rosmer I have made it a rule for some time past not to support any one or anything that is actively opposed to the Church

Rosmer Then you have yourself returned to the Church?

Mortensgård That concerns no one but myself

Rosmer Ah, so that is it Now I understand you

Mortensgård Pastor Rosmer—you ought to remember that I—I in particular—have not full liberty of action

Rosmer What hampers you?

Mortensgård The fact that I am a marked man

Rosmer Ah—indeed

Mortensgård A marked man, Pastor Rosmer You, above all men, should remember that, for I have chiefly you to thank for the scandal that branded me

Rosmer If I had then stood where I stand now, I should have dealt more gently with your offence

Mortensgård That I don't doubt But it is too late now You have branded me once for all—branded me for life I suppose you can scarcely understand what that means But now you may perhaps come to feel the smart of it yourself, Pastor Rosmer

Rosmer I?

Mortensgård Yes You surely don't



suppose that Rector Kroll and his set will ever forgive a desertion like yours? I hear the "County News" is going to be very savage in future. You, too, may find yourself a marked man before long.

*Rosmer* In personal matters, Mr Mortensgård, I feel myself secure from attack. My life is beyond reproach.

*Mortensgård* [with a sly smile] That's a large word, Mr Rosmer.

*Rosmer* Perhaps, but I have a right to use it.

*Mortensgård* Even if you were to scrutinise your conduct as closely as you once scrutinised mine?

*Rosmer* Your tone is very curious. What are you hinting at? Anything definite?

*Mortensgård* Yes, something definite. Only one thing. But that might be bad enough, if malicious opponents got wind of it.

*Rosmer* Will you have the kindness to let me hear what it is?

*Mortensgård* Cannot you guess for yourself, Pastor?

*Rosmer* No, certainly not. I have not the slightest idea.

*Mortensgård* Well, well, I suppose I must come out with it then—I have in my possession a strange letter, dated from Rosmersholm.

*Rosmer* Miss West's letter, do you mean? Is it so strange?

*Mortensgård* No, there's nothing strange about that. But I once received another letter from this house.

*Rosmer* Also from Miss West?

*Mortensgård* No, Mr Rosmer.

*Rosmer* Well then, from whom? From whom?

*Mortensgård* From the late Mrs Rosmer.

*Rosmer* From my wife! You received a letter from my wife!

*Mortensgård* I did.

*Rosmer* When?

*Mortensgård* Towards the close of Mrs Rosmer's life. Perhaps about a year and a half ago. That is the letter I call strange.

*Rosmer* I suppose you know that my wife's mind was affected at that time.

*Mortensgård* Yes, I know many people thought so. But I don't think there was anything in the letter to show it. When I call it strange, I mean in another sense.

*Rosmer* And what in the world did my poor wife take it into her head to write to you about?

*Mortensgård* I have the letter at home. She begins to the effect that she is living in great anxiety and fear, there are so many malicious people about here, she says, and they think of nothing but causing you trouble and injury.

*Rosmer* Me?

*Mortensgård* Yes, so she says. And then comes the strangest part of all. Shall I go on, Pastor Rosmer?

*Rosmer* Assuredly! Tell me everything, without reserve.

*Mortensgård* The deceased lady begs and implores me to be magnanimous. She knows, she says, that it was her husband that had me dismissed from my post as teacher, and she conjured me by all that's sacred not to avenge myself.

*Rosmer* How did she suppose you could avenge yourself?

*Mortensgård* The letter says that if I should hear rumours of sinful doings at Rosmersholm, I am not to believe them, they are only spread abroad by wicked people who wish to make you unhappy.

*Rosmer* Is all that in the letter?

*Mortensgård* You may read it for yourself, sir, when you please.

*Rosmer* But I don't understand—I! What did she imagine the rumour to be about?

*Mortensgård* Firstly, that the Pastor had deserted the faith of his fathers. Your wife denied that absolutely—then. And next—h'm—

*Rosmer* Next?

*Mortensgård* Well, next she writes—rather confusedly—that she knows nothing of any sinful intrigue at Rosmersholm, that she has never been wronged in any way. And if any such rumours should get about, she implores me to say nothing of the matter in the "Beacon."

*Rosmer* Is no name mentioned?

*Mortensgård* None.

*Rosmer* Who brought you the letter?

*Mortensgård* I have promised not to say. It was handed to me one evening, at dusk.

*Rosmer* If you had made inquiries at the time, you would have learnt that my poor, unhappy wife was not fully accountable for her actions.

*Mortensgård* I did make inquiries, Pastor Rosmer But I must say that was not the impression I received

*Rosmer* Was it not?—But what is your precise reason for telling me now about this incomprehensible old letter?

*Mortensgård* To impress on you the necessity for extreme prudence, Pastor Rosmer

*Rosmer* In my life, do you mean?

*Mortensgård* Yes You must remember that from today you have ceased to be a neutral

*Rosmer* Then you have quite made up your mind that I must have something to conceal?

*Mortensgård* I don't know why an emancipated man should refrain from living his life out as fully as possible But, as I said before, be exceedingly cautious in future If anything should get abroad that conflicts with current prejudices, you may be sure the whole liberal movement will have to suffer for it—Good-bye, Pastor Rosmer

*Rosmer* Good-bye

*Mortensgård* I shall go straight to the office and have the great news put into the "Beacon"

*Rosmer* Yes, omit nothing

*Mortensgård* I shall omit nothing that the public need know

[*He bows and goes out ROSMER remains standing in the doorway while he goes down the stairs The outer door is heard to close*]

*Rosmer* [*in the doorway, calls softly*] Rebecca! Re—H'm [*Aloud*] Madam Helseth,—is Miss West not there?

*Madam Helseth* [*from the hall*] No, Pastor Rosmer, she's not here

[*The curtain at the back is drawn aside REBECCA appears in the doorway*]

*Rebecca* Rosmer!

*Rosmer* [*turns*] What! Were you in my room? My dear, what were you doing there?

*Rebecca* [*goes up to him*] I was listening

*Rosmer* Oh, Rebecca, how could you?

*Rebecca* I could not help it He said it so hatefully—that about my morning gown—

*Rosmer* Then you were there when Kroll—?

*Rebecca* Yes I wanted to know what was lurking in his mind

*Rosmer* I would have told you

*Rebecca* You would scarcely have told me all And certainly not in his own words

*Rosmer* Did you hear everything, then?

*Rebecca* Nearly everything, I think I had to go downstairs for a moment when Mortensgård came

*Rosmer* And then you came back again—?

*Rebecca* Don't be vexed with me, dear friend!

*Rosmer* Do whatever you think right You are mistress of your own actions—But what do you say to all this, Rebecca—? Oh, I seem never to have needed you so much before!

*Rebecca* Both you and I have been prepared for what must happen some time

*Rosmer* No, no—not for this

*Rebecca* Not for this?

*Rosmer* I knew well enough that sooner or later our beautiful, pure friendship might be misinterpreted and soiled Not by Kroll—I could never have believed such a thing of him—but by all those other people with the coarse souls and the ignoble eyes Oh yes—I had reason enough for keeping our alliance so jealously concealed It was a dangerous secret

*Rebecca* Oh, why should we care what all those people think! We know in our own hearts that we are blameless

*Rosmer* Blameless? I? Yes, I thought so—till to-day But now—now, Rebecca—?

*Rebecca* Well, what now?

*Rosmer* How am I to explain Beata's terrible accusation?

*Rebecca* [*vehemently*] Oh, don't speak of Beata! Don't think of Beata any more! You were just beginning to shake off the hold she has upon you, even in the grave

*Rosmer* Since I have heard all this, she seems, in a ghastly sort of way, to be alive again

*Rebecca* Oh no—not that, Rosmer! Not that!

*Rosmer* Yes, I tell you We must try to get to the bottom of this What can possibly have led her to misinterpret things so fatally?

*Rebecca* You are surely not beginning to doubt that she was on the very verge of insanity?

*Rosmer* Oh yes—that is just what I

can't feel quite certain of any longer And besides—even if she was——

*Rebecca* If she was? Well, what then?

*Rosmer* I mean—where are we to look for the determining cause that drove her morbid spirit over the borderline of madness?

*Rebecca* Oh, why brood over problems no one can solve?

*Rosmer* I cannot help it, Rebecca I cannot shake off these gnawing doubts, however much I may wish to

*Rebecca* But it may become dangerous—this eternal dwelling upon one miserable subject

*Rosmer* [*walks about restlessly, in thought*] I must have betrayed myself in one way or another She must have noticed how happy I began to feel from the time you came to us

*Rebecca* Yes but, dear, even if she did——?

*Rosmer* Be sure it didn't escape her that we read the same books—that the interest of discussing all the new ideas drew us together Yet I cannot understand it! I was so careful to spare her As I look back, it seems to me I made it the business of my life to keep her in ignorance of all our interests Did I not, Rebecca?

*Rebecca* Yes, yes, certainly you did

*Rosmer* And you, too And yet——! Oh, it's terrible to think of! She must have gone about here—full of her morbid passion—saying never a word—watching us—noting everything—and misinterpreting everything

*Rebecca* [*pressing her hands together*] Oh, I should never have come to Rosmersholm!

*Rosmer* To think of all she must have suffered in silence! All the foulness her sick brain must have conjured up around us! Did she never say anything to you to put you at all on the alert?

*Rebecca* [*as if startled*] To me! Do you think I should have stayed a day longer if she had?

*Rosmer* No, no, of course not—Oh, what a battle she must have fought! And alone, too, Rebecca, desperate and quite alone!—and then, at last, that heart-breaking, accusing victory—in the mill-race

[*Throws himself into the chair by the writing-table, with his elbows on the table and his face in his hands*]

*Rebecca* [*approaches him cautiously from*

*behind*] Listen, Rosmer If it were in your power to call Beata back—to you—to Rosmersholm—would you do it?

*Rosmer* Oh, how do I know what I would or would not do? I can think of nothing but this one thing—that cannot be recalled

*Rebecca* You were just beginning to live, Rosmer You had begun You had freed yourself—on every side You felt so buoyant and happy——

*Rosmer* Oh, yes—I did indeed—And now this crushing blow falls on me

*Rebecca* [*behind him, rests her arms on the chair-back*] How beautiful it was when we sat in the twilight, in the room downstairs, helping each other to lay out our new life-plans! You were to set resolutely to work in the world—the living world of today, as you said You were to go as a messenger of emancipation from home to home, to win over minds and wills, to create noble-men around you in wider and wider circles Noble-men

*Rosmer* Happy noble-men

*Rebecca* Yes—happy

*Rosmer* For it is happiness that ennobles, Rebecca

*Rebecca* Should you not say—sorrow as well? A great sorrow?

*Rosmer* Yes—if one can get through it—over it—away from it

*Rebecca* That is what you must do

*Rosmer* [*shakes his head gloomily*] I shall never get over this—wholly There will always be a doubt—a question left I can never again know that luxury of the soul which makes life so marvellously sweet to live!

*Rebecca* [*bends over his chair-back, and says more softly*] What is it you mean, Rosmer?

*Rosmer* [*looking up at her*] Peaceful, happy innocence

*Rebecca* [*recoils a step*] Yes Innocence  
[*A short pause*]

*Rosmer* [*with his elbow on the table, leaning his head on his hand, and looking straight before him*] And what extraordinary penetration she showed! How systematically she put all this together! First she begins to doubt my orthodoxy—— How could that occur to her? But it did occur to her, and then it grew to be a certainty And then—yes, then of course it was easy for her to think all the rest possible [*Sits*

*up in his chair and runs his hands through his hair* Oh, all these horrible imaginings! I shall never get rid of them I feel it I know it At any moment they will come rushing in upon me, and bring back the thought of the dead!

*Rebecca* Like the White Horse of Rosmersholm

*Rosmer* Yes, like that Rushing forth in the darkness—in the silence

*Rebecca* And because of this miserable figment of the brain, you will let slip the hold you were beginning to take upon the living world?

*Rosmer* You may well think it hard Yes, hard, Rebecca But I have no choice How could I ever leave this behind me?

*Rebecca* [*behind his chair*] By entering into new relations

*Rosmer* [*surprised, looks up*] New relations?

*Rebecca* Yes, new relations to the outside world Live, work, act Don't sit here brooding and groping among insoluble enigmas

*Rosmer* [*rises*] New relations? [*Walks across the floor, stops at the door and then comes back*] One question occurs to me Has it occurred to you too, Rebecca?

*Rebecca* [*drawing breath with difficulty*] Let me—hear—what it is

*Rosmer* What form do you think our relations will take after to-day?

*Rebecca* I believe our friendship will endure—come what may

*Rosmer* That is not exactly what I meant The thing that first brought us together, and that unites us so closely—our common faith in a pure comradeship between man and woman—

*Rebecca* Yes, yes—what of that?

*Rosmer* I mean, that such a relation—as this of ours—does it not presuppose a quiet, happy, peaceful life—?

*Rebecca* What then?

*Rosmer* But the life I must now look forward to is one of struggle and unrest and strong agitations For I will live my life, Rebecca! I will not be crushed to earth by horrible possibilities I will not have my course of life forced upon me, either by the living or by—any one else

*Rebecca* No, no—do not! Be an absolutely free man, Rosmer!

*Rosmer* But can you not guess what is in my mind? Do you not know? Don't

you see how I can best shake off all gnawing memories—all the unhappy past?

*Rebecca* How?

*Rosmer* By opposing to it a new, a living reality

*Rebecca* [*feeling for the chair-back*]. A living— What do you mean?

*Rosmer* [*comes nearer*] Rebecca—if I were to ask you—will you be my second wife?

*Rebecca* [*for a moment speechless, then cries out with joy*] Your wife! Your—! I!

*Rosmer* Come, let us try it We two will be one The place of the dead must stand empty no longer

*Rebecca* I—in Beata's place—!

*Rosmer* Then she will be out of the saga—completely—for ever and ever

*Rebecca* [*softly, trembling*] Do you believe that, Rosmer?

*Rosmer* It must be so! It must! I cannot—I will not go through life with a dead body on my back Help me to cast it off, Rebecca And let us stifle all memories in freedom, in joy, in passion You shall be to me the only wife I have ever had

*Rebecca* [*with self-command*] Never speak of this again I will never be your wife

*Rosmer* What! Never! Do you not think you could come to love me? Is there not already a strain of love in our friendship?

*Rebecca* [*puts her hands over her ears as if in terror*] Don't speak so, Rosmer! Don't say such things!

*Rosmer* [*seizes her arm*] Yes, yes—there is a growing promise in our relation Oh, I can see that you feel it, too Do you not, Rebecca?

*Rebecca* [*once more firm and calm*] Listen to me I tell you—if you persist in this, I will go away from Rosmersholm

*Rosmer* Go way! You! You cannot It is impossible

*Rebecca* It is still more impossible that I should be your wife Never in this world can I marry you

*Rosmer* [*looks at her in surprise*] You say "can", and you say it so strangely Why can you not?

*Rebecca* [*seizes both his hands*] Dear friend—both for your own sake and for

mine—do not ask why [*Lets go his hands*]  
Do not, Rosmer

[*Goes towards the door on the left*]

Rosmer Henceforth I can think of nothing but that one question—why?

Rebecca [*turns and looks at him*] Then it is all over

Rosmer Between you and me?

Rebecca Yes

Rosmer It will never be all over between us two You will never leave Rosmersholm

Rebecca [*with her hand on the door-handle*] No, perhaps I shall not But if you ask me again—it is all over.

Rosmer All over? How—?

Rebecca For then I will go the way that Beata went Now you know it, Rosmer.

Rosmer Rebecca—?

Rebecca [*in the doorway, nods slowly*] Now you know it

[*She goes out*]

Rosmer [*stares, thunderstruck, at the door, and says to himself*] What—is—this?

### ACT THREE

*The sitting-room at Rosmersholm The window and the entrance door are open The sun is shining outside Forenoon*

REBECCA WEST, dressed as in the first Act, stands at the window, watering and arranging the flowers Her crochet work lies in the armchair MADAM HELSETH is moving about, dusting the furniture with a feather-brush

Rebecca [*after a short silence*] I can't understand the Pastor remaining so long upstairs to-day

Madam Helseth Oh, he often does that But he'll soon be down now, I should think

Rebecca Have you seen anything of him?

Madam Helseth I caught a glimpse of him when I went upstairs with his coffee He was in his bedroom, dressing

Rebecca I asked because he was a little out of sorts yesterday

Madam Helseth He didn't look well I wonder if there isn't something amiss between him and his brother-in-law

Rebecca What do you think it can be?

Madam Helseth I couldn't say Perhaps it's that Mortensgård that has been setting them against each other

Rebecca Likely enough—Do you know anything of this Peter Mortensgård?

Madam Helseth No indeed How could you think so, Miss? A fellow like him?

Rebecca Do you mean because he edits such a low paper?

Madam Helseth Oh, it's not only that—You must have heard, Miss, that he had a child by a married woman that had been deserted by her husband?

Rebecca Yes, I have heard of it But it must have been long before I came here

Madam Helseth It's true he was very young at the time, and she should have known better He wanted to marry her, too, but of course he couldn't do that And I don't say he hasn't paid dear for it—But, good Lord, Mortensgård has got on in the world since those days There's a many people run after him now

Rebecca Yes, most of the poor people bring their affairs to him when they're in any trouble

Madam Helseth Ah, and others, too, perhaps, besides the poor folk—

Rebecca [*looks at her furtively*] Indeed

Madam Helseth [*by the sofa, dusting away vigorously*] Perhaps the last people you would think likely to, Miss

Rebecca [*busy with the flowers*] Come, now, that's only an idea of yours, Madam Helseth You can't be sure of what you're saying

Madam Helseth You think I can't, Miss? But I can tell you I am Why—if you must know it—I once took a letter in to Mortensgård myself

Rebecca [*turning*] No—did you?

Madam Helseth Yes, indeed I did And a letter that was written here at Rosmersholm, too

Rebecca Really, Madam Helseth?

Madam Helseth Yes, that it was And it was on fine paper, and there was a fine red seal on it, too

Rebecca And it was given to you to deliver? Then, my dear Madam Helseth, it's not difficult to guess who wrote it

Madam Helseth Well?

Rebecca It must have been something that poor Mrs Rosmer, in her morbid state—

Madam Helseth It's you that say that, Miss, not me

Rebecca But what was in the letter? Oh, I forgot—you can't know that

*Madam Helseth* H'm, what if I did know it, all the same?

*Rebecca* Did she tell you what she was writing about?

*Madam Helseth* No, she didn't exactly do that. But Mortensgård, when he'd read it, he began questioning me backwards and forwards and up and down, so that I soon guessed what was in it.

*Rebecca* Then what do you think it was? Oh my dear good Madam Helseth, do tell me.

*Madam Helseth* Oh no, Miss. Not for the whole world.

*Rebecca* Oh you can surely tell me. We two are such good friends.

*Madam Helseth* Lord preserve me from telling you anything about that, Miss. I can only tell you that it was something horrible that they'd got the poor sick lady to believe.

*Rebecca* Who had got her to believe it?

*Madam Helseth* Wicked people, Miss. West. Wicked people.

*Rebecca* Wicked—?

*Madam Helseth* Yes, I say it again. They must have been real wicked people.

*Rebecca* And who do you think it could have been?

*Madam Helseth* Oh, I know well enough what to think. But Lord forbid I should say anything. To be sure there's a certain lady in the town—h'm!

*Rebecca* I can see that you mean Mrs Kroll.

*Madam Helseth* Ah, she's a fine one, she is. She has always been the great lady with me. And she's never had any too much love for you neither.

*Rebecca* Do you think Mrs Rosmer was in her right mind when she wrote that letter to Mortensgård?

*Madam Helseth* It's a queer thing a person's mind, Miss. Clean out of her mind I don't think she was.

*Rebecca* But she seemed to go distracted when she learned that she must always be childless. It was that that unsettled her reason.

*Madam Helseth* Yes, poor lady, that was a dreadful blow to her.

*Rebecca* [takes up her crochet and sits in a chair by the window] But after all—don't you think it was a good thing for the Pastor, Madam Helseth?

*Madam Helseth* What, Miss?

*Rebecca* That there were no children. Don't you think so?

*Madam Helseth* H'm, I'm sure I don't know what to say about that.

*Rebecca* Oh yes, believe me, it was fortunate for him. Pastor Rosmer is not the man to have crying children about his house.

*Madam Helseth* Ah, Miss, little children don't cry at Rosmersholm.

*Rebecca* [looks at her] Don't cry?

*Madam Helseth* No. As long as people can remember, children have never been known to cry in this house.

*Rebecca* That's very strange.

*Madam Helseth* Yes, isn't it? But it runs in the family. And then there's another strange thing. When they grow up, they never laugh. Never, as long as they live.

*Rebecca* Why, how extraordinary—

*Madam Helseth* Have you ever once heard or seen the Pastor laugh, Miss?

*Rebecca* No—now that I think of it, I almost believe you are right. But I don't think any one laughs much in this part of the country.

*Madam Helseth* No, they don't. They say it began at Rosmersholm. And then I suppose it spread round about, as if it was catching-like.

*Rebecca* You are a very wise woman, Madam Helseth.

*Madam Helseth* Oh, Miss, you mustn't sit there and make fun of me. [Listens] Hush, hush—here's the Pastor coming down. He doesn't like to see dusting going on.

[She goes out to the right]

[JOHANNES ROSMER, with his hat and stick in his hand, enters from the hall]

*Rosmer* Good morning, Rebecca.

*Rebecca* Good morning, dear. [A moment after—crocheting] Are you going out?

*Rosmer* Yes.

*Rebecca* It's a beautiful day.

*Rosmer* You didn't look in on me this morning.

*Rebecca* No, I didn't. Not to-day.

*Rosmer* Do you not intend to in future?

*Rebecca* Oh, I don't know yet, dear.

*Rosmer* Has anything come for me?

*Rebecca* The "County News" has come.

*Rosmer* The "County News"?

*Rebecca* There it is on the table.

*Rosmer [puts down his hat and stick]* Is there any thing—?

*Rebecca* Yes

*Rosmer* And you didn't send it up?

*Rebecca* You will read it soon enough

*Rosmer* Oh, indeed? [*Takes the paper and reads, standing by the table*]—What!—"We cannot warn our readers too earnestly against unprincipled renegades" [*Looks at her*] They call me a renegade, Rebecca

*Rebecca* They mention no names

*Rosmer* That makes no difference [*Reads on*] "Secret traitors to the good cause"—"Judas-natures, who make brazen confession of their apostasy as soon as they think the most convenient and—profitable moment has arrived" "Ruthless befouling of a name honoured through generations"—"in the confident hope of a suitable reward from the party in momentary power" [*Lays down the paper on the table*] And they can say such things of me!—Men who have known me so long and so well! Things they themselves don't believe Things they know there is not a word of truth in—they print them all the same

*Rebecca* That is not all

*Rosmer [takes up the paper again]* "Inexperience and lack of judgment the only excuse"—"pernicious influence—possibly extending to matters which, for the present, we do not wish to make subjects of public discussion or accusation" [*Looks at her*] What is this?

*Rebecca* It is aimed at me, plainly enough

*Rosmer [lays down the paper]* Rebecca, —this is the conduct of dishonourable men

*Rebecca* Yes, they need scarcely be so contemptuous of Mortensgård

*Rosmer [walks about the room]* Something must be done All that is good in human nature will go to ruin, if this is allowed to go on But it shall not go on! Oh, what a joy—what a joy it would be to me to let a little light into all this gloom and ugliness!

*Rebecca [rises]* Ah, yes, Rosmer In that you have a great and glorious object to live for

*Rosmer* Only think, if I could rouse them to see themselves as they are, teach them to repent and blush before their better natures, bring them together in mutual forbearance—in love, Rebecca!

*Rebecca* Yes, put your whole strength into that, and you must succeed

*Rosmer* I think success must be possible Oh, what a delight it would be then to live one's life! No more malignant wrangling, only emulation All eyes fixed on the same goal Every mind, every will pressing forward—upward—each by the path its nature prescribes for it Happiness for all—through all [*Happens to look out of the window, starts and says sadly*] Ah! Not through me

*Rebecca* Not—? Not through you?

*Rosmer* Nor for me

*Rebecca* Oh Rosmer, do not let such doubts take hold of you

*Rosmer* Happiness—dear Rebecca—happiness is above all things the calm, glad certainty of innocence

*Rebecca [looks straight before her]* Yes, innocence—

*Rosmer* Oh, you cannot know what guilt means But I—

*Rebecca* You least of all!

*Rosmer [points out of the window]* The mill-race

*Rebecca* Oh Rosmer—!

[*MADAM HELSETH looks in at the door*]

*Madam Helseth* Miss West!

*Rebecca* Presently, presently Not now

*Madam Helseth* Only a word, Miss

[*REBECCA goes to the door MADAM HELSETH tells her something They whisper together for a few moments*]

*MADAM HELSETH nods and goes out*]

*Rosmer [uneasily]* Was it anything for me?

*Rebecca* No, only something about the house-work—You ought to go out into the fresh air, dear Rosmer You should take a good long walk

*Rosmer [takes up his hat]* Yes, come Let us go together

*Rebecca* No, dear, I can't just now You must go alone But shake off all these gloomy thoughts Promise me

*Rosmer* I am afraid I shall never shake them off

*Rebecca* Oh, that such baseless fancies should take so strong a hold of you—!

*Rosmer* Not so baseless I am afraid, Rebecca I lay awake all night thinking it over and over Perhaps Beata saw clearly after all

*Rebecca* In what?



Rosmer. In her belief that I loved you, Rebecca

Rebecca Right in that!

Rosmer [*lays his hat down on the table*] The question that haunts me is this—were we two not deceiving ourselves all the time—when we called our relation friendship?

Rebecca You mean that it might as well have been called—?

Rosmer —love Yes, Rebecca, that is what I mean Even while Beata was alive, all my thoughts were for you It was you alone I longed for It was when you were by my side that I felt the calm gladness of utter content If you think it over, Rebecca—did we not feel for each other from the first a sort of sweet, secret child-love—desireless, dreamless? Was it not so with you? Tell me

Rebecca [*struggling with herself*] Oh—I don't know what to answer

Rosmer And it was this close-linked life in and for each other that we took for friendship No Rebecca—our bond has been a spiritual marriage—perhaps from the very first That is why there is guilt on my soul I had no right to such happiness—it was a sin against Beata

Rebecca No right to live happily? Do you believe that, Rosmer?

Rosmer She looked at our relation with the eyes of her love—judged it after the fashion of her love Inevitably Beata could not have judged otherwise than she did

Rebecca But how can you accuse yourself because of Beata's delusion?

Rosmer It was love for me—her kind of love—that drove her into the mill-race That is an immovable fact, Rebecca And that is what I can never get over

Rebecca Oh, think of nothing but the great, beautiful task you have devoted your life to

Rosmer [*shakes his head*] It can never be accomplished, dear Not by me Not after what I have come to know

Rebecca Why not by you?

Rosmer Because no cause ever triumphs that has its origin in sin

Rebecca [*vehemently*] Oh, these are only ancestral doubts—ancestral fears—ancestral scruples They say the dead come back to Rosmersholm in the shape of rushing white horses I think this shows that it is true

Rosmer Be that as it may, what does it matter, so long as I cannot rid myself of the feeling? And believe me, Rebecca, it is as I tell you The cause that is to win a lasting victory must have for its champion a happy and innocent man

Rebecca Is happiness so indispensable to you, Rosmer?

Rosmer Happiness? Yes, dear,—it is

Rebecca To you, who can never laugh?

Rosmer Yes, in spite of that Believe me, I have a great capacity for happiness

Rebecca Now go for your walk, dear A good long walk Do you hear?—See, here is your hat And your stick, too

Rosmer [*takes both*] Thanks And you won't come with me?

Rebecca No, no, I can't just now

Rosmer Very well, then You are with me nonetheless

[*He goes out by the entrance door*]

Rebecca waits a moment, cautiously watching his departure from behind the open door, then she goes to the door on the right

Rebecca [*opens the door, and says in a low tone*] Now, Madam Helene You can show him in now

[*Goes towards the window*]

[*A moment after Rector Knoll enters from the right He bows silently and formally, and keeps his hat in his hand*]

Knoll He has gone out?

Rebecca Yes

Knoll Does he usually stay out long?

Rebecca Yes, he does But one cannot count on him to-day So if you don't care to meet him—

Knoll No, no It is you I want to speak to,—quite alone

Rebecca Then we had better not lose time Sit down, Rector

[*She sits in the easy-chair by the window Rector Knoll sits on a chair beside her*]

Knoll Miss West—you can scarcely imagine how deeply and painfully I have taken this to heart—this change in Johannes Rosmer

Rebecca We expected it would be so—at first

Knoll Only at first?

Rebecca Rosmer was confident that sooner or later you would join him

Knoll I?



*Rebecca* You and all his other friends

*Kroll* Ah, there you see! That shows the infirmity of his judgment in all that concerns men and practical life

*Rebecca* But after all—since he feels it a necessity to emancipate himself on all sides—

*Kroll* Yes, but wait—that is just what I do not believe

*Rebecca* What do you believe, then?

*Kroll* I believe that you are at the bottom of it all

*Rebecca* It is your wife who has put that in your head, Rector Kroll

*Kroll* No matter who has put it in my head. What is certain is that I feel a strong suspicion—an exceedingly strong suspicion—when I think things over and piece together all I know of your behaviour ever since you came here

*Rebecca* [*looks at him*] I seem to recollect a time when you felt an exceedingly strong faith in me, dear Rector. I might almost call it a warm faith

*Kroll* [*in a subdued voice*] Whom could you not bewitch—if you tried?

*Rebecca* Did I try—?

*Kroll* Yes, you did. I am no longer such a fool as to believe that there was any feeling in the matter. You simply wanted to get a footing at Rosmersholm—to strike root here—and in that I was to serve you. Now I see it

*Rebecca* You seem utterly to have forgotten that it was Beata who begged and implored me to come out here?

*Kroll* Yes, when you had bewitched her to. Can the feeling she came to entertain for you be called friendship? It was adoration—almost idolatry. It developed into—what shall I call it?—a sort of desperate passion—Yes, that is the right word for it

*Rebecca* Be so good as to recollect the state your sister was in. So far as I am concerned, I don't think any one can accuse me of being hysterical

*Kroll* No, that you certainly are not. But that makes you all the more dangerous to the people you want to get into your power. It is easy for you to weigh your acts and calculate consequences—just because your heart is cold

*Rebecca* Cold? Are you so sure of that?

*Kroll* I am quite certain of it now. Otherwise you could never have lived here

year after year without faltering in the pursuit of your object. Well, well—you have gained your end. You have got him and everything into your power. But in order to do so, you have not scrupled to make him unhappy

*Rebecca* That is not true. It is not I—it is you yourself that have made him unhappy

*Kroll* I?

*Rebecca* Yes, when you led him to imagine that he was responsible for Beata's terrible end

*Kroll* Does he feel that so deeply, then?

*Rebecca* How can you doubt it? A mind so sensitive as his—

*Kroll* I thought that an emancipated man, so-called, was above all such scruples—But there we have it! Oh yes—I admit I knew how it would be. The descendant of the men that look down on us from these walls—how could he hope to cut himself adrift from all that has been handed down without a break from generation to generation?

*Rebecca* [*looks down thoughtfully*] Johannes Rosmer's spirit is deeply rooted in his ancestry. That is very certain

*Kroll* Yes, and you should have taken that fact into consideration, if you had felt any affection for him. But that sort of consideration was no doubt beyond you. There is such an immeasurable difference between your antecedents and his

*Rebecca* What antecedents do you mean?

*Kroll* I am speaking of your origin—your family antecedents, Miss West

*Rebecca* Oh, indeed! Yes, it is quite true that I come of very humble folk. Nevertheless—

*Kroll* I am not thinking of rank and position. I allude to your moral antecedents

*Rebecca* Moral—? In what sense?

*Kroll* The circumstances of your birth

*Rebecca* What do you mean?

*Kroll* I only mention the matter because it accounts for your whole conduct

*Rebecca* I do not understand this. You must explain

*Kroll* I really did not suppose you could require an explanation. Otherwise it would have been very odd that you should have let Dr West adopt you—

*Rebecca* [*rises*] Ah! Now I understand

*Kroll*—and that you should have taken his name Your mother's name was Gamvik

*Rebecca* [walks across the room] My father's name was Gamvik, Rector Kroll

*Kroll* Your mother's business must have brought her very frequently into contact with the parish doctor

*Rebecca* Yes, it did

*Kroll* And then he takes you into his house—as soon as your mother dies He treats you harshly, and yet you stay with him You know that he won't leave you a half-penny—as a matter of fact, you only got a case full of books—and yet you stay on, you bear with him, you nurse him to the last

*Rebecca* [stands by the table, looking scornfully at him] And you account for all this by assuming that there was something immoral—something criminal about my birth?

*Kroll* I attribute your care for him to involuntary filial instinct Indeed I believe your whole conduct is determined by your origin

*Rebecca* [vehemently] But there is not a single word of truth in what you say! And I can prove it! Dr West did not come to Finmark till after I was born

*Kroll* Excuse me, Miss West He settled there the year before I have assured myself of that

*Rebecca* You are mistaken, I say! You are utterly mistaken

*Kroll* You told me the day before yesterday that you were nine-and-twenty—in your thirtieth year

*Rebecca* Indeed! Did I say so?

*Kroll* Yes, you did And I can calculate from that—

*Rebecca* Stop! You needn't calculate I may as well tell you at once I am a year older than I gave myself out to be

*Kroll* [smiles incredulously] Really! I am surprised! What can be the reason of that?

*Rebecca* When I had passed twenty-five, it seemed to me I was getting altogether too old for an unmarried woman And so I began to lie about my age

*Kroll* You? An emancipated woman! Have you prejudices about the age for marriage?

*Rebecca* Yes, it was idiotic of me—idiotic and absurd But some folly or other

will always cling to us, not to be shaken off We are made so

*Kroll* Well, so be it, but my calculation may be right, nonetheless For Dr West was up there on a short visit the year before he got the appointment

*Rebecca* [with a vehement outburst] It is not true!

*Kroll* Is it not true?

*Rebecca* No My mother never spoke of any such visit

*Kroll* Did she not?

*Rebecca* No, never Nor Dr West either, not a word about it

*Kroll* Might not that be because they both had reasons for suppressing a year? Just as you have done, Miss West Perhaps it is a family foible

*Rebecca* [walks about clenching and wringing her hands] It is impossible You want to cheat me into believing it This can never, never be true It cannot! Never in this world—

*Kroll* [rises] My dear Miss West—why in heaven's name are you so terribly excited? You quite frighten me! What am I to think—to believe—?

*Rebecca* Nothing! You are to think and believe nothing

*Kroll* Then you must really tell me how you can take this affair—this possibility—so terribly to heart

*Rebecca* [controlling herself] It is perfectly simple, Rector Kroll I have no wish to be taken for an illegitimate child

*Kroll* Indeed! Well, well, let us be satisfied with that explanation—in the meantime But in that case you must still have a certain—prejudice on that point, too?

*Rebecca* Yes, I suppose I have

*Kroll* Ah, I fancy it is much the same with most of what you call your "emancipation" You have read yourself into a number of new ideas and opinions You have got a sort of smattering of recent discoveries in various fields—discoveries that seem to overthrow certain principles which have hitherto been held impregnable and unassailable But all this has only been a matter of the intellect, Miss West—a superficial acquisition It has not passed into your blood

*Rebecca* [thoughtfully] Perhaps you are right

*Kroll* Yes, look into your own mind, and you will see! And if this is the case with

you, one may easily guess how it must be with Johannes Rosmer. It is sheer, unmitigated madness—it is running blindfold to destruction—for him to think of coming openly forward and confessing himself an apostate! Only think—a man of his sensitive nature! Imagine him disowned and persecuted by the circle of which he has always formed a part—exposed to ruthless attacks from all the best people in the community! He is not—he never can be the man to endure all that.

*Rebecca* He must endure it! It is too late now for him to retreat.

*Kroll* Not at all too late. By no means. What has happened can be hushed up—or at least explained away as a mere temporary aberration, however deplorable. But—one measure is certainly indispensable.

*Rebecca* And what is that?

*Kroll* You must get him to legalise the position, Miss West.

*Rebecca* His position towards me?

*Kroll* Yes. You must make him do that.

*Rebecca* Then you absolutely cannot clear your mind of the idea that our position requires to be—legalised, as you call it?

*Kroll* I would rather not go into the matter too closely. But I believe I have noticed that it is nowhere easier to break through all so-called prejudices than in—him—

*Rebecca* In the relation between man and woman, you mean?

*Kroll* Yes,—to speak plainly—I think so.

*Rebecca* [*wanders across the room and looks out at the window*] I could almost say—I wish you were right, Rector Kroll.

*Kroll* What do you mean by that? You say it so strangely.

*Rebecca* Oh well—please let us drop the subject. Ah,—there he comes.

*Kroll* Already! Then I will go.

*Rebecca* [*goes towards him*] No—please stay. There is something I want you to hear.

*Kroll* Not now. I don't feel as if I could bear to see him.

*Rebecca* I beg you to stay. Do! If not, you will regret it by-and-by. It is the last time I shall ask you for anything.

*Kroll* [*looks at her in surprise and puts down his hat*] Very well, Miss West—so be it, then.

[*A short silence. Then JOHANNES ROSMER enters from the hall*]

*Rosmer* [*sees the RECTOR, and stops in the doorway*] What!—Are you here?

*Rebecca* He did not wish to meet you, dear?

*Kroll* [*involuntarily*] "Dear!"

*Rebecca* Yes, Rector Kroll, Rosmer and I say "dear" to each other. That is one result of our "position."

*Kroll* Was that what you wanted me to hear?

*Rebecca* That—and a little more.

*Rosmer* [*comes forward*] What is the object of this visit?

*Kroll* I wanted to try once more to stop you and win you back to us.

*Rosmer* [*points to the newspaper*]. After what appears in that paper?

*Kroll* I did not write it.

*Rosmer* Did you make the slightest effort to prevent its appearance?

*Kroll* That would have been to betray the cause I serve. And, besides, it was not in my power.

*Rebecca* [*tears the paper into shreds, crushes up the pieces and throws them behind the stove*] There! Now it is out of sight. And let it be out of mind, too. For there will be nothing more of that sort, Rosmer.

*Kroll* Ah, if you could only make sure of that!

*Rebecca* Come, let us sit down, dear. All three of us. And then I will tell you everything.

*Rosmer* [*seats himself mechanically*] What has come over you, Rebecca? This unnatural calmness—what is it?

*Rebecca* The calmness of resolution. [*Sits herself*] Pray sit down, too, Rector.

[*RECTOR KROLL seats himself on the sofa*]

*Rosmer* Resolution, you say? What resolution?

*Rebecca* I am going to give you back what you require in order to live your life. Dear friend, you shall have your happy innocence back again!

*Rosmer* What can you mean?

*Rebecca* I have only to tell you something. That will be enough.

*Rosmer* Well!

*Rebecca* When I came down here from Finmark—along with Dr. West—it seemed to me that a great, wide new world was

\* In the original Rebecca here addresses Rosmer as "du" for the first time in Kroll's presence.

opening up before me The Doctor had taught me all sorts of things—all the fragmentary knowledge of life that I possessed in those days [*With a struggle and in a scarcely audible voice*] And then—

Kroll And then?

Rosmer But Rebecca—I know all this

Rebecca [*mastering herself*] Yes, yes—you are right You know enough about this

Kroll [*looks hard at her*] Perhaps I had better go

Rebecca No, please stay where you are, my dear Rector [*To ROSMER*] Well, you see, this was how it was—I wanted to take my share in the life of the new era that was dawning, with all its new ideas—Rector Kroll told me one day that Ulric Brendel had had great influence over you while you were still a boy I thought it must surely be possible for me to carry on his work

Rosmer You came here with a secret design—?

Rebecca We two, I thought, should march onward in freedom, side by side Ever onward Ever farther and farther to the front But between you and perfect emancipation there rose that dismal, insurmountable barrier

Rosmer What barrier do you mean?

Rebecca I mean this, Rosmer You could grow into freedom only in the clear, fresh sunshine—and here you were pining, sickening in the gloom of such a marriage

Rosmer You have never before spoken to me of my marriage in that tone

Rebecca No, I did not dare to, for I should have frightened you

Kroll [*nods to ROSMER*] Do you hear that?

Rebecca [*goes on*] But I saw quite well where your deliverance lay—your only deliverance And then I went to work

Rosmer Went to work? In what way?

Kroll Do you mean that—?

Rebecca Yes, Rosmer— [*Rises*] Sit still You, too, Rector Kroll But now it must out It was not you, Rosmer You are innocent It was I that lured—that ended in luring Beata out into the paths of delusion—

Rosmer [*springs up*] Rebecca!

Kroll [*rises from the sofa*] The paths of delusion!

Rebecca The paths—that led to the mill-race Now you know it both of you

Rosmer [*as if stunned*] But I don't understand— What is it she is saying? I don't understand a word—!

Kroll Oh yes, Rosmer, I am beginning to understand

Rosmer But what did you do? What can you possibly have told her? There was nothing—absolutely nothing to tell!

Rebecca She came to know that you were working yourself free from all the old prejudices

Rosmer Yes, but that was not the case at that time

Rebecca I knew that it soon would be Kroll [*nods to ROSMER*] Aha!

Rosmer And then? What more? I must know all now

Rebecca Some time after—I begged and implored her to let me go away from Rosmersholm

Rosmer Why did you want to go—then?

Rebecca I did not want to go, I wanted to stay here, where I was But I told her that it would be best for us all—that I should go away in time I gave her to understand that if I stayed here any longer, I could not—I could not tell—what might happen

Rosmer Then this is what you said and did!

Rebecca Yes, Rosmer

Rosmer This is what you call “going to work”

Rebecca [*in a broken voice*] I called it so, yes

Rosmer [*after a pause*] Have you confessed all now, Rebecca?

Rebecca Yes

Kroll Not all

Rebecca [*looks at him in fear*] What more should there be?

Kroll Did you not at last give Beata to understand that it was necessary—not only that it would be wisest, but that it was necessary—both for your own sake and Rosmer's, that you should go away somewhere—as soon as possible? Well?

Rebecca [*low and indistinctly*] Perhaps I did say something of the sort

Rosmer [*sinks into the armchair by the window*] And this tissue of lies and deceit she—my unhappy, sick wife believed in! Believed in it so firmly! So immovably! [*Looks up at REBECCA*] And she never turned to me Never said one word to me!

Oh, Rebecca,—I can see it in your face—you dissuaded her from it!

*Rebecca* She had conceived a fixed idea that she, as a childless wife, had no right to be here. And then she imagined that it was her duty to you to efface herself.

*Rosmer* And you—you did nothing to disabuse her of the idea?

*Rebecca* No.

*Kroll* Perhaps you confirmed her in it? Answer me! Did you not?

*Rebecca* I believe she may have understood me so.

*Rosmer* Yes, yes—and in everything she bowed before your will. And she did efface herself! [*Springs up*] How could you—how could you play this ghastly game!

*Rebecca* It seemed to me I had to choose between your life and hers, Rosmer.

*Kroll* [*severely and impressively*] That choice was not for you to make.

*Rebecca* [*vehemently*] You think then that I was cool and calculating and self-possessed all the time! I was not the same woman then that I am now, as I stand here telling it all. Besides, there are two sorts of will in us I believe! I wanted Beata away, by one means or another, but I never really believed that it would come to pass. As I felt my way forward, at each step I ventured, I seemed to hear something within me cry out. No farther! Not a step farther! And yet I could not stop. I had to venture the least little bit farther. Only one hair's-breadth more. And then one more—and always one more—And then it happened—That is the way such things come about. [*A short silence*]

*Rosmer* [*to REBECCA*] What do you think lies before you now? After this?

*Rebecca* Things must go with me as they will. It doesn't greatly matter.

*Kroll* Not a word of remorse! Is it possible you feel none?

*Rebecca* [*coldly putting aside his question*] Excuse me, Rector Kroll—that is a matter which concerns no one but me. I must settle it with myself.

*Kroll* [*to ROSMER*] And this is the woman you are living under the same roof with—in the closest intimacy! [*Looks round at the pictures*] Oh, if those that are gone could see us now!

*Rosmer* Are you going back to town?

*Kroll* [*takes up his hat*] Yes. The sooner the better.

*Rosmer* [*does the same*] Then I will go with you.

*Kroll* Will you? Ah, yes, I was sure we had not lost you for good.

*Rosmer* Come then, Kroll! Come!

[*Both go out through the hall without looking at REBECCA*]

[*After a moment, REBECCA goes cautiously to the window and looks out through the flowers*]

*Rebecca* [*speaks to herself under her breath*] Not over the foot-bridge to-day either. He goes round. Never across the mill-race. Never. [*Leaves window*] Well, well, well!

[*Goes and pulls the bell-rope; a moment after, MADAM HELSETH enters from the right*]

*Madam Helseth* What is it, Miss?

*Rebecca* Madam Helseth, would you be so good as to have my trunk brought down from the garret?

*Madam Helseth* Your trunk?

*Rebecca* Yes—the brown sealskin trunk, you know.

*Madam Helseth* Yes, yes. But, Lord, preserve us—are you going on a journey, Miss?

*Rebecca* Yes—now I am going on a journey, Madam Helseth.

*Madam Helseth* And immediately!

*Rebecca* As soon as I have packed up.

*Madam Helseth* Well, I've never heard the like of that! But you'll come back again soon, Miss, of course?

*Rebecca* I shall never come back again.

*Madam Helseth* Never! Dear Lord, what will things be like at Rosmersholm when you're gone, Miss? And the poor Pastor was just beginning to be so happy and comfortable.

*Rebecca* Yes, but I have taken fright to-day, Madam Helseth.

*Madam Helseth* Taken fright! Dear, dear! how was that?

*Rebecca* I thought I saw something like a glimpse of white horses.

*Madam Helseth* White horses! In broad daylight!

*Rebecca* Oh, they are abroad early and late—the white horses of Rosmersholm. [*With a change of tone*] Well,—about the trunk, Madam Helseth.

*Madam Helseth* Yes, yes. The trunk.

[*Both go out to the right*]

ACT FOUR

*The sitting-room at Rosmersholm Late evening A lighted lamp, with a shade over it, on the table*

REBECCA WEST stands by the table, packing some small articles in a hand-bag Her cloak, hat and the white crocheted shawl are hanging over the back of the sofa

MADAM HELSETH enters from the right

Madam Helseth [*speaks in a low voice and appears ill at ease*] All your things have been taken down, Miss They are in the kitchen passage

Rebecca Very well You have ordered the carriage?

Madam Helseth Yes The coachman wants to know what time he ought to be here

Rebecca About eleven o'clock, I think. The steamer starts at midnight

Madam Helseth [*hesitates a little*] But the Pastor? If he shouldn't be home by that time?

Rebecca I shall go all the same If I don't see him, you can tell him that I will write to him—a long letter Tell him that

Madam Helseth Yes, writing—that may be all very well But, poor Miss West—I do think you should try to speak to him once more

Rebecca Perhaps so And yet—perhaps not

Madam Helseth Well—that I should live to see this! I never thought of such a thing

Rebecca What did you think then, Madam Helseth?

Madam Helseth Well, I certainly thought Pastor Rosmer was a more dependable man than this

Rebecca Dependable?

Madam Helseth Yes, that's what I say

Rebecca Why, my dear Madam Helseth, what do you mean?

Madam Helseth I mean what's right and true, Miss He shouldn't get out of it in this way, that he shouldn't

Rebecca [*looks at her*] Come now, Madam Helseth, tell me plainly what do you think is the reason I am going away?

Madam Helseth Well, Heaven forgive us, I suppose it can't be helped, Miss Ah, well, well, well! But I certainly don't think the Pastor's behaving handsome-like Mor-

tensgård had some excuse, for her husband was alive, so that they two couldn't marry, however much they wanted to But as for the Pastor—h'm!

Rebecca [*with a faint smile*] Could you have believed such a thing of Pastor Rosmer and me?

Madam Helseth No, never in this world At least, I mean—not until to-day

Rebecca But to-day, then—?

Madam Helseth Well,—after all the horrible things that they tell me the papers are saying about the Pastor—

Rebecca Aha!

Madam Helseth For the man that can go over to Mortensgård's religion—good Lord, I can believe anything of him

Rebecca Oh, yes, I suppose so But what about me? What have you to say about me?

Madam Helseth Lord preserve us, Miss—I don't see that there's much to be said against you It's not so easy for a lone woman to be always on her guard, that's certain—We're all of us human, Miss West

Rebecca That's very true, Madam Helseth We are all of us human—What are you listening to?

Madam Helseth [*in a low voice*] Oh, Lord,—if I don't believe that's him coming

Rebecca [*starts*] After all then—? [*Resolutely*] Well well, so be it

[JOHANNES ROSMER enters from the hall]

Rosmer [*sees the hand-bag, etc., turns to REBECCA, and asks*] What does this mean?

Rebecca I am going

Rosmer At once?

Rebecca Yes [*To MADAM HELSETH*] Eleven o'clock then

Madam Helseth Very well, Miss

[*Goes out to the right*]

Rosmer [*after a short pause*] Where are you going to, Rebecca?

Rebecca North, by the steamer

Rosmer North? What takes you to the North?

Rebecca It was there I came from

Rosmer But you have no ties there now

Rebecca I have none here either

Rosmer What do you think of doing?

Rebecca I don't know I only want to have done with it all

Rosmer To have done with it?

Rebecca Rosmersholm has broken me

Rosmer [*his attention aroused*] Do you say that?

*Rebecca* Broken me utterly and hopelessly—I had a free and fearless will when I came here. Now I have bent my neck under a strange law—From this day forth, I feel as if I had no courage for anything in the world.

*Rosmer* Why not? What is the law that you say you have—?

*Rebecca* Dear, don't let us talk of that just now—What happened between you and the Rector?

*Rosmer* We have made peace.

*Rebecca* Ah yes, so that was the end.

*Rosmer* He gathered all our old friends together at his house. They have made it clear to me that the work of ennobling the minds of men—is not for me—And besides, it is hopeless in itself, Rebecca—I shall let it alone.

*Rebecca* Yes, yes—perhaps it is best so.

*Rosmer* Is that what you say now? Do you think so now?

*Rebecca* I have come to think so—in the last few days.

*Rosmer* You are lying, Rebecca.

*Rebecca* Lying—!

*Rosmer* Yes, you are lying. You have never believed in me. You have never believed that I was man enough to carry the cause through to victory.

*Rebecca* I believed that we two together could do it.

*Rosmer* That is not true. You thought that you yourself could do something great in life, and that you could use me to further your ends. I was to be a serviceable instrument to you—that is what you thought.

*Rebecca* Listen to me, Rosmer—

*Rosmer* [*seats himself listlessly on the sofa*] Oh, what is the use? I see through it all now—I have been like a glove in your hands.

*Rebecca* Listen, Rosmer. Hear what I have to say. It will be for the last time. [*Sits in a chair close to the sofa*] I intended to write you all about it—when I was back in the North. But I daresay it is best that you should hear it at once.

*Rosmer* Have you more confessions to make?

*Rebecca* The greatest of all is to come.

*Rosmer* The greatest?

*Rebecca* What you have never suspected. What gives light and shade to all the rest.

*Rosmer* [*shakes his head*] I don't understand you at all.

*Rebecca* It is perfectly true that I once schemed to gain a footing at Rosmersholm. I thought I could not fail to turn things to good account here. In one way or the other—you understand.

*Rosmer* Well, you accomplished your ends.

*Rebecca* I believe I could have accomplished anything, anything in the world—at that time. For I had still my fearless, free-born will. I knew no scruples—I stood in awe of no human tie—But then began what has broken my will—and cowed me so pitifully for all my days.

*Rosmer* What began? Do not speak in riddles.

*Rebecca* It came over me,—this wild, uncontrollable passion— Oh, Rosmer—!

*Rosmer* Passion? You—! For what?

*Rebecca* For you.

*Rosmer* [*tries to spring up*] What is this?

*Rebecca* [*stops him*]. Sit still, dear, there is more to tell.

*Rosmer* And you mean to say—that you have loved me—in that way!

*Rebecca* I thought that it should be called love—then. Yes, I thought it was love. But it was not. It was what I said. It was a wild, uncontrollable passion.

*Rosmer* [*with difficulty*] Rebecca, is it really you—you yourself—that you are speaking of?

*Rebecca* Yes, would you believe it, Rosmer?

*Rosmer* Then it was because of this—under the influence of this—that you—that you “went to work,” as you call it?

*Rebecca* It came upon me like a storm on the sea. It was like one of the storms we sometimes have in the North in the winter time. It seizes you—and whirls you along with it—wherever it will. There is no resisting it.

*Rosmer* And so it swept the unhappy Beata into the mill-race.

*Rebecca* Yes, for it was a life-and-death struggle between Beata and me at that time.

*Rosmer* Assuredly you were the strongest at Rosmersholm. Stronger than Beata and I together.

*Rebecca* I judged you rightly in so far that I was sure I could never reach you un-



til you were a free man, both in circumstances—and in spirit

*Rosmer* But I don't understand you, Rebecca You—yourself—your whole conduct is an insoluble riddle to me I am free now—both in spirit and in circumstances You have reached the very goal you aimed at from the first And yet—

*Rebecca* I have never stood farther from my goal than now

*Rosmer* And yet I say—when I asked you yesterday—begged you to be my wife—you cried out, as if in fear, that it could never be

*Rebecca* I cried out in despair, Rosmer

*Rosmer* Why?

*Rebecca* Because Rosmersholm has sapped my strength My old fearless will has had its wings clipped here It is crippled! The time is past when I had courage for anything in the world I have lost the power of action, Rosmer

*Rosmer* Tell me how this has come about

*Rebecca* It has come about through my life with you

*Rosmer* But how? How?

*Rebecca* When I was left alone with you here,—and when you had become yourself again—

*Rosmer* Yes, yes?

*Rebecca* —for you were never quite yourself so long as Beata lived—

*Rosmer* I am afraid you are right there.

*Rebecca* But when I found myself sharing your life here,—in quiet—in solitude,—when you showed me all your thoughts without reserve—every tender and delicate feeling, just as it came to you—then the great change came over me Little by little, you understand Almost imperceptibly—but at last with such overwhelming force that it reached to the depths of my soul

*Rosmer* Oh, is this true, Rebecca?

*Rebecca* All the rest—the horrible sense-intoxicated desire—passed far, far away from me All the whirling passions settled down into quiet and silence Rest descended on my soul—a stillness as on one of our northern bird-cliffs under the midnight sun

*Rosmer* Tell me more of this Tell me all you can

*Rebecca* There is not much more, dear Only this—it was love that was born in me The great self-denying love, that is content

with life, as we two have lived it together

*Rosmer* Oh, if I had only had the faintest suspicion of all this!

*Rebecca* It is best as it is Yesterday—when you asked me if I would be your wife—I cried out with joy—

*Rosmer* Yes, did you not, Rebecca! I thought that was the meaning of your cry

*Rebecca* For a moment, yes I had forgotten myself It was my old buoyant will that was struggling to be free But it has no energy left now—no power of endurance

*Rosmer* How do you account for what has happened to you?

*Rebecca* It is the Rosmer view of life—or your view of life, at any rate—that has infected my will

*Rosmer* Infected?

*Rebecca* And made it sick Enslaved it to laws that had no power over me before You—life with you—has ennobled my mind—

*Rosmer* Oh that I could believe it!

*Rebecca* You may safely believe it! The Rosmer view of life ennobles But—  
[Shaking her head] But—but—

*Rosmer* But—? Well?

*Rebecca* —but it kills happiness

*Rosmer* Do you think so, Rebecca?

*Rebecca* My happiness, at any rate

*Rosmer* Yes, but are you so certain of that? If I were to ask you again now—? If I were to beg and entreat you—?

*Rebecca* Dear,—never speak of this again! It is impossible—! For you must know, Rosmer, I have a—a past behind me

*Rosmer* More than what you have told me?

*Rebecca* Yes Something different and something more

*Rosmer* [with a faint smile] Is it not strange, Rebecca? Some such idea has crossed my mind now and then

*Rebecca* It has? And yet—? Even so—?

*Rosmer* I never believed it I only played with it—in my thoughts, you understand

*Rebecca* If you wish it, I will tell you all, at once

*Rosmer* [turning it off] No, no! I will not hear a word. Whatever it may be—I can forget it

*Rebecca* But I cannot

*Rosmer* Oh Rebecca—!

*Rebecca* Yes, Rosmer—this is the ter—



rible part of it that now, when all life's happiness is within my grasp—my heart is changed, and my own past cuts me off from it

*Rosmer* Your past is dead, Rebecca It has no hold on you any more—it is no part of you—as you are now

*Rebecca* Oh, you know that these are only phrases, dear And innocence? Where am I to get that from?

*Rosmer [sadly]* Ah,—innocence

*Rebecca* Yes, innocence That is the source of peace and happiness That was the vital truth you were to implant in the coming generation of happy noble-men—

*Rosmer* Oh, don't remind me of that It was only an abortive dream, Rebecca—an immature idea, that I myself no longer believe in—Ah no, we cannot be ennobled from without, Rebecca

*Rebecca [softly]* Not even by tranquil love, Rosmer?

*Rosmer [thoughtfully]* Yes—that would be the great thing—the most glorious in life, almost—if it were so [*Moves uneasily*] But how can I be certain of that? How convince myself?

*Rebecca* Do you not believe me, Rosmer?

*Rosmer* Oh, Rebecca—how can I believe in you, fully? You who have all this while been cloaking, concealing such a multitude of things!—Now you come forward with something new If you have a secret purpose in all this, tell me plainly what it is Is there anything you want to gain by it? You know that I will gladly do everything I can for you

*Rebecca [wringing her hands]* Oh this killing doubt—! Rosmer—Rosmer—!

*Rosmer* Yes, is it not terrible, Rebecca? But I cannot help it I shall never be able to shake off the doubt I can never be absolutely sure that you are mine in pure and perfect love

*Rebecca* Is there nothing in the depths of your own heart that bears witness to the transformation in me? And tells you that it is due to you—and you alone?

*Rosmer* Oh, Rebecca—I no longer believe in my power of transforming any one My faith in myself is utterly dead I believe neither in myself nor in you

*Rebecca [looks darkly at him]* Then how will you be able to live your life?

*Rosmer* That I don't know I cannot

imagine how I don't think I can live it— And I know of nothing in the world that is worth living for

*Rebecca* Oh, life—life will renew itself Let us hold fast to it, Rosmer—We shall leave it soon enough

*Rosmer [springs up restlessly]* Then give me my faith again! My faith in you, Rebecca! My faith in your love! Proof! I must have proof!

*Rebecca* Proof? How can I give you proof—?

*Rosmer* You must! [*Walks across the room*] I cannot bear this desolation—this horrible emptiness—this—this—

[*A loud knock at the hall door*]

*Rebecca [starts up from her chair]* Ah—did you hear that?

[*The door opens* *ULRIC BRENDDEL enters* He has a white shirt on, a black coat and a good pair of boots, with his trousers tucked into them Otherwise he is dressed as in the first Act He looks excited]

*Rosmer* Ah, is it you, Mr Brendel?

*Brendel* Johannes, my boy—hail—and farewell!

*Rosmer* Where are you going so late?

*Brendel* Downhill

*Rosmer* How—?

*Brendel* I am going homewards, my beloved pupil I am home-sick for the mighty Nothingness

*Rosmer* Something has happened to you, Mr Brendel! What is it?

*Brendel* So you observe the transformation? Yes—well you may When I last set foot in these halls—I stood before you as a man of substance and slapped my breast-pocket

*Rosmer* Indeed! I don't quite understand—

*Brendel* But as you see me this night, I am a deposed monarch on the ash-heap that was my palace

*Rosmer* If there is anything I can do for you—

*Brendel* You have preserved your child-like heart, Johannes Can you grant me a loan?

*Rosmer* Yes, yes, most willingly!

*Brendel* Can you spare me an ideal or two?

*Rosmer* What do you say?

*Brendel* One or two cast-off ideals It

would be an act of charity For I'm cleaned out, my boy Ruined, beggared

Rebecca Have you not delivered your lecture?

Brendel No, seductive lady What do you think? Just as I am standing ready to pour forth the horn of plenty, I make the painful discovery that I am bankrupt

Rebecca But all your unwritten works—?

Brendel For five-and-twenty years I have sat like a miser on his double-locked treasure-chest And then yesterday—when I open it and want to display the treasure—there's none there! The teeth of time had ground it into dust There was *na* and nothing in the whole concern

Rosmer But are you so sure of that?

Brendel There's no room for doubt, my dear fellow The President has convinced me of it

Rosmer The President?

Brendel Well well—His Excellency then *Ganz nach Belieben*

Rosmer What do you mean?

Brendel Peter Mortensgård, of course

Rosmer What?

Brendel [*mysteriously*] Hush, hush, hush! Peter Mortensgård is the lord and leader of the future Never have I stood in a more august presence Peter Mortensgård has the secret of omnipotence He can do whatever he will

Rosmer. Oh, don't believe that

Brendel Yes, my boy! For Peter Mortensgård never wills more than he can do Peter Mortensgård is capable of living his life without ideals And that, do you see—that is just the mighty secret of action and of victory It is the sum of the whole world's wisdom *Basta!*

Rosmer [*in a low voice*] Now I understand—why you leave here poorer than you came

Brendel *Bien!* Then take a *Beispiel* by your ancient teacher Rub out all that he once imprinted on your mind Build not thy house on shifting sand And look ahead—and feel your way—before you build on this exquisite creature, who here lends sweetness to your life

Rebecca Is it me you mean?

Brendel Yes, my fascinating mermaid

Rebecca Why am I not to be built on?

Brendel [*comes a step nearer*] I gather

that my former pupil has a great cause to carry forward to victory

Rebecca What then—?

Brendel Victory is assured But—mark me well—on one indispensable condition

Rebecca Which is—?

Brendel [*taking her gently by the wrist*] That the woman who loves him shall gladly go out into the kitchen and hack off her tender, rose-white little finger—here—just here at the middle joint Item, that the aforesaid loving woman—again gladly—shall slice off her incomparably-moulded left ear [*Lets her go, and turns to Rosmer*] Farewell, my conquering Johannes

Rosmer Are you going now? In the dark night?

Brendel The dark night is best Perce be with you

[*He goes There is a short silence in the room*]

Rebecca [*breathes heavily*] Oh, how close and sultry it is here!

[*Goes to the window, opens it, and remains standing by it*]

Rosmer [*sits down in the armchair by the stove*] There is nothing else for it after all,

Rebecca I see it You must go away

Rebecca Yes, I see no choice

Rosmer Let us make the most of our last hour Come here and sit by me

Rebecca [*goes and sits on the sofa*] What do you want to say to me, Rosmer?

Rosmer First I want to tell you that you need not feel any anxiety about your future

Rebecca [*smiles*] H'm, my future

Rosmer I have long ago arranged for everything Whatever may happen, you are provided for

Rebecca That too, my dear one?

Rosmer You might surely have known that

Rebecca It is many a long day since I have given a thought to such things

Rosmer Yes, yes—you thought things would always remain as they were between us

Rebecca Yes, I thought so

Rosmer So did I But if I were to go—

Rebecca Oh, Rosmer—you will live longer than I

Rosmer Surely my worthless life lies in my own hands

*Rebecca* What is this? You are never thinking of——!

*Rosmer* Do you think it would be so strange? After this pitiful, lamentable defeat! I, who was to have borne a great cause on to victory—have I not fled from the battle before it was well begun?

*Rebecca* Take up the fight again, Rosmer! Only try—and you shall see, you will conquer. You will ennoble hundreds—thousands of minds. Only try!

*Rosmer* Oh, Rebecca—I, who no longer believe in my own mission!

*Rebecca* But your mission has stood the test already. You have ennobled one human being at least—me you have ennobled for the rest of my days.

*Rosmer* Oh—if I dared believe you.

*Rebecca* [*pressing her hands together*] Oh, Rosmer,—do you know of nothing—nothing that could make you believe it?

*Rosmer* [*starts as if in fear*] Don't speak of that! Keep away from that, Rebecca! Not a word more.

*Rebecca* Yes, this is precisely what we must speak about. Do you know of anything that would kill the doubt? For I know of nothing in the world.

*Rosmer* It is well for you that you do not know—It is well for both of us.

*Rebecca* No, no, no—I will not be put off in this way! If you know of anything that would absolve me in your eyes, I claim as my right to be told of it.

*Rosmer* [*as if impelled against his will to speak*] Then let us see. You say that a great love is in you, that through me your mind has been ennobled. Is it so? Is your reckoning just, Rebecca? Shall we try to prove the sum? Say?

*Rebecca* I am ready.

*Rosmer* At any time?

*Rebecca* Whenever you please. The sooner the better.

*Rosmer* Then let me see, Rebecca,—if you for my sake—this very evening—  
[*Breaks off*] Oh, no, no, no!

*Rebecca* Yes, Rosmer! Yes! Tell me, and you shall see.

*Rosmer* Have you the courage—have you the will—gladly, as Ulric Brendel said—for my sake, to-night—gladly—to go the same way that Beata went?

*Rebecca* [*rises slowly from the sofa, almost voiceless*] Rosmer——!

*Rosmer* Yes, Rebecca—that is the ques-

tion that will for ever haunt me—when you are gone. Every hour in the day it will return upon me. Oh, I seem to see you before my very eyes. You are standing out on the foot-bridge—right in the middle. Now you are bending forward over the railing—drawn dizzily downwards, downwards towards the rushing water! No—you recoil. You have not the heart to do what she dared.

*Rebecca* But if I had the heart to do it? And the will to do it gladly? What then?

*Rosmer* I should have to believe you then. I should recover my faith in my mission. Faith in my power to ennoble human souls. Faith in the human soul's power to attain nobility.

*Rebecca* [*takes up her shawl slowly and puts it over her head, says with composure*] You shall have your faith again.

*Rosmer* Have you the will and the courage—for this, Rebecca?

*Rebecca* That you shall see to-morrow—or afterwards—when they find my body.

*Rosmer* [*puts his hand to his forehead*] There is a horrible fascination in this——!

*Rebecca* For I don't want to remain down there. Not longer than necessary. You must see that they find me.

*Rosmer* [*springs up*] But all this—is nothing but madness. Go—or stay! I will take your bare word this time too.

*Rebecca* Phrases, Rosmer! Let us have no more cowardly subterfuges, dear! How can you believe me on my bare word after this day?

*Rosmer* I shrink from seeing your defeat, Rebecca!

*Rebecca* It will be no defeat.

*Rosmer* Yes, it will. You will never bring yourself to go Beata's way.

*Rebecca* Do you think not?

*Rosmer* Never. You are not like Beata. You are not under the dominion of a distorted view of life.

*Rebecca* But I am under the dominion of the Rosmersholm view of life—now. What I have sinned—it is fit that I should expiate.

*Rosmer* [*looks at her fixedly*] Is that your point of view?

*Rebecca* Yes.

*Rosmer* [*with resolution*] Well then, I stand firm in our emancipated view of life, Rebecca. There is no judge over us, and therefore we must do justice upon ourselves.

*Rebecca* [misunderstanding him] Yes, that is true—that too My going away will save what is best in you

*Rosmer* Oh, there is nothing left to save in me

*Rebecca* Yes, there is But I—after to-day, I should only be a sea-troll dragging down the ship that is to carry you forward I must go overboard Why should I remain here in the world, trailing after me my own crippled life? Why brood and brood over the happiness that my past has forfeited for ever? I must give up the game, Rosmer

*Rosmer* If you go—I go with you

*Rebecca* [smiles almost imperceptibly, looks at him, and says more softly] Yes, come with me—and see—

*Rosmer* I go with you, I say

*Rebecca* To the foot-bridge, yes You know you never dare go out upon it

*Rosmer* Have you noticed that?

*Rebecca* [sadly and brokenly] Yes—It was that that made my love hopeless

*Rosmer* Rebecca,—now I lay my hand on your head—[Does so]—and I wed you as my true wife

*Rebecca* [takes both his hands, and bows her head towards his breast] Thanks, Rosmer [Lets him go] And now I will go—gladly

*Rosmer* Man and wife should go together

*Rebecca* Only to the bridge, Rosmer

*Rosmer* Out on to it, too As far as you go—so far shall I go with you For now I dare

*Rebecca* Are you absolutely certain—that this way is the best for you?

*Rosmer* I am certain that it is the only way

*Rebecca* If you were deceiving yourself?

If it were only a delusion? One of those white horses of Rosmersholm

*Rosmer* It may be so For we can never escape from them—we of this house

*Rebecca* Then stay, Rosmer!

*Rosmer* The husband shall go with his wife, as the wife with her husband

*Rebecca* Yes, but first tell me this Is it you who follow me? Or is it I who follow you?

*Rosmer* We shall never think that question out

*Rebecca* But I should like to know

*Rosmer* We go with each other, Rebecca—I with you, and you with me

*Rebecca* I almost think that is the truth

*Rosmer* For now we two are one

*Rebecca* Yes We are one Come! We go gladly [They go out hand in hand through the hall, and are seen to turn to the left The door remains open The room stands empty for a little while Then the door to the right is opened by MADAM HELSETH]

*Madam Helseth* Miss West—the carriage is— [Looks round] Not here? Out together at this time of night? Well—I must say—! H'm! [Goes out into the hall, looks round and comes in again] Not on the garden seat Ah, well, well [Goes to the window and looks out] Oh, good God! that white thing there—! My soul! They're both of them out on the bridge! God forgive the sinful creatures—if they're not in each other's arms! [Shrieks aloud] Oh—down—both of them! Out into the mill-race! Help! Help! [Her knees tremble, she holds on to the chair-back, shaking all over, she can scarcely get the words out] No No help here—The dead wife has taken them

THE END



COMRADES

(KAMRATERNA)

BY AUGUST STRINDBERG

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## AUGUST STRINDBERG AND HIS PLAYS

AUGUST STRINDBERG, the author of *Comrades*, was born in Stockholm in 1849 and for a time attended the University of Upsala, where his studies were interrupted by ill health. Although from the first a dramatist by instinct and desire, he was by turns schoolmaster, journalist, actor, and librarian. His short stories and novels established his reputation as a writer, and the production of his first great play, *The Father*, in 1887, definitely marked him as the chief dramatist of Sweden. He founded his own theatre in Stockholm, where he staged his plays. He was married three times, each marriage ending in divorce. This fact has been offered as an explanation of the singularly bitter attitude toward women that is shown in several of his most celebrated plays, but this attitude is not necessarily the result of his unhappy experiences, since it manifested itself even before his first marriage. As a result of overwork and nervous strain, his mind became affected, and he had to spend a year in a sanitarium, but in 1897 he resumed his work with even greater vigor and success. He died in 1912.

Strindberg has become recognized as one of the most original and powerful forces in modern drama. Although younger than Ibsen and Bjornson, who created the modern drama of Norway as he did that of Sweden, he was not influenced by them, and he ranks with them as an innovator. He belongs, simply as a man of the theatre, perhaps more to the present, and even to the future, than either Ibsen or Bjornson. Strindberg is one of the most difficult of dramatists to classify, for his plays cover so wide a range of matter, form, and style. Historical romances, historical biographical plays, in which he applies the new psychology to old material, naturalistic comedies and tragedies, fairy plays, and plays of mysticism and fantasy. He is known most widely as a naturalist, perhaps, but he is a naturalist who penetrates beneath surfaces, seeking inner realities. In this incessant search he grows impatient of restrictions of form, and progresses farther and farther beyond mere surface realism, altering his technique and style (or, rather, having it altered for him by the inner necessities of his material), until he reaches sheer symbolism, mysticism, and that method which he was the first to discover and practice, and which is now termed "expressionism."



## CHARACTERS

AXEL, *an artist*

BERTHA, *his wife, artist*

ABEL, *her friend*

WILLMER, *litterateur*

ÖSTERMARK, *a doctor*

MRS HALL, *his divorced wife*

THE MISSES HALL, *her daughters by a second marriage*

CARL STARCK, *lieutenant*

MRS STARCK, *his wife*

MAID

*The action takes place in Paris at the present day*

## COMRADES

### ACT ONE

*An artist's studio in Paris, it is on the ground floor, has glass windows looking out on an orchard. At back of scene a large window and door to hall. On the walls hang studies, canvases, weapons, costumes and plaster casts. To right there is a door leading to AXEL'S room, to left a door leading to BERTHA'S room. There is a model stand left center. To right an easel and painting materials. A large sofa, a large stove through the doors of which one sees a hot coal fire. There is a hanging-lamp from ceiling. At rise of curtain AXEL and DOCTOR ÖSTERMARK are discovered.*

Axel [*Sitting, painting*] And you, too, are in Paris!

Dr Östermark Everything gathers here as the center of the world, and so you are married—and happy?

Axel Oh, yes, so, so. Yes, I'm quite happy. That's understood.

Dr Östermark What's understood?

Axel Look here, you're a widower. How was it with your marriage?

Dr Östermark Oh, very nice—for her.

Axel And for you?

Dr Östermark So, so! But you see one must compromise, and we compromised to the end.

Axel What do you mean by compromise?

Dr Östermark I mean—that I gave in!

Axel You?

Dr Östermark Yes, you wouldn't think that of a man like me, would you?

Axel No, I would never have thought that. Look here, don't you believe in woman, eh?

Dr Östermark No, sir! I do not. But I love her.

Axel In your way—yes!

Dr Östermark In my way—yes. How about your way?

Axel We have arranged a sort of comradeship, you see, and friendship is higher and more enduring than love.

Dr Östermark H'm—so Bertha paints too. How? Well?

Axel Fairly well.

Dr Östermark We were good friends in the old days, she and I,—that is, we always quarreled a little—Some visitors. Hush! It is Carl and his wife!

Axel [*Rising*] And Bertha isn't at home! Sacrist! [*Enter LIEUTENANT CARL STARCK and his wife*] Welcome! Well, well, we certainly meet here from all corners of the world! How do you do, Mrs Starck? You're looking well after your journey.

Mrs Starck Thanks, dear Axel, we have certainly had a delightful trip. But where is Bertha?

Carl Yes, where is the young wife?

Axel She's out at the studio, but she'll be home at any moment now. But won't you sit down?

[*The doctor greets the visitors*]

Carl Hardly. We were passing by and thought we would just look in to see how you are. But we shall be on hand, of course, for your invitation for Saturday, the first of May.

Axel That's good. You got the card then?

Mrs Starck Yes, we received it while we were in Hamburg. Well, what is Bertha doing nowadays?

Axel Oh, she paints, as I do. In fact, we're expecting her model, and as he may come at any moment, perhaps I can't ask you to sit down after all, if I'm going to be honest.

Carl Do you think we would blush, then?

Mrs Starck He isn't nude, is he?

Axel Of course.

Carl A man? The devil!—No, I couldn't allow my wife to be mixed up with anything of that sort. Alone with a naked man!

Axel I see you still have prejudices, Carl.

Carl Yes, you know—

Mrs Starck Fie!

Dr Östermark Yes, that's what I say, too.

Axel I can't deny that it is not alto-

gether to my taste, but as long as I must have a woman model——

*Mrs Starck* That's another matter.

*Axel* Another?

*Mrs Starck* Yes, it is another matter—although it resembles the other, it is not the same [There is a knock]

*Axel* There he is!

*Mrs Starck* We'll go, then Good-bye and au revoir Give my love to Bertha

*Axel* Good-bye, then, as you're so scared. And au revoir

*Carl and Dr Östermark* Good-bye, Axel.

*Carl* [To AXEL] You stay in here, at least, while——

*Axel* No, why should I?

*Carl* [Goes shaking his head] Ugh!

[AXEL alone starts to paint There is a knock]

*Axel* Come in [THE MODEL enters] So, you are back again Madame hasn't returned yet

*The Model* But it's almost twelve, and I must keep another appointment

*Axel* Is that so? It's too bad, but—h'm—something must have detained her at the studio How much do I owe you?

*The Model* Five francs, as usual

*Axel* [Paying him] There Perhaps you'd better wait a while, nevertheless

*The Model* Yes, if I'm needed

*Axel* Yes, be kind enough to wait a few minutes

[THE MODEL retires behind a screen

AXEL alone, draws and whistles

BERTHA comes in after a moment]

*Axel* Hello, my dear! So you're back at last?

*Bertha* At last?

*Axel* Yes, your model is waiting

*Bertha* [Startled] No! No! Has he been here again?

*Axel* You had engaged him for eleven o'clock

*Bertha* I? No! Did he say that?

*Axel* Yes But I heard you when you made the engagement yesterday

*Bertha* Perhaps it's so, then, but anyway the professor wouldn't let us leave and you know how nervous one gets in the last hours You're not angry with me, Axel?

*Axel* Angry? No But this is the second time, and he gets his five francs for nothing, nevertheless

*Bertha* Can I help it if the professor keeps us? Why must you always pick on me?

*Axel* Do I pick on you?

*Bertha* What's that? Didn't you——

*Axel* Yes, yes, yes! I picked on you—forgive me—forgive me—for thinking that it was your fault

*Bertha* Well, it's all right then But what did you pay him with?

*Axel* To be sure Gaga paid back the twenty francs he owed me

*Bertha* [Takes out account-book] So, he paid you back? Come on, then, and I'll put it down, for the sake of order It's your money, so of course you can dispose of it as you please, but as you wish me to take care of the accounts—[Writes] fifteen francs in, five francs out, model There

*Axel* No Look here It's twenty francs in

*Bertha* Yes, but there are only fifteen here

*Axel* Yes, but you should put down twenty

*Bertha* Why do you argue?

*Axel* Did I—Well, the man's waiting

*Bertha* Oh, yes Be good and get things ready for me

*Axel* [Puts model stand in place. Calls to MODEL] Are you undressed yet?

*The Model.* [From back of screen] Soon, monsieur

*Bertha* [Closes door, puts wood in stove] There, now you must go out

*Axel* [Hesitating] Bertha!

*Bertha* Yes?

*Axel* Is it absolutely necessary—with a nude model?

*Bertha* Absolutely!

*Axel* H'm—indeed!

*Bertha* We have certainly argued that matter out

*Axel* Quite true But it's loathsome nevertheless—— [Goes out right]

*Bertha* [Takes up brushes and palette Calls to MODEL] Are you ready?

*The Model* All ready

*Bertha* Come on, then [Pause] Come on [There is a knock] Who is it? I have a model

*Willmer* [Outside] Willmer With news from the salon

*Bertha* From the salon! [To MODEL]

Dress yourself! We'll have to postpone the sitting—Axel! Willmer is here with news from the salon.

[*AXEL comes in, also WILLMER, THE MODEL goes out unnoticed during the following scene*]

*Willmer* Hello, dear friends! Tomorrow the jury will begin its work Oh, *Bertha*, here are our pastels [*Takes package from pocket*]

*Bertha* Thanks, my good Gaga, how much did they cost? They must have been expensive

*Willmer* Oh, not very.

*Bertha* So they are to start tomorrow So soon? Do you hear, Axel?

*Axel* Yes, my friend

*Bertha* Now, will you be very good, very, very good?

*Axel* I always want to be good to you, my friend

*Bertha* You do? Now, listen You know Roubey, don't you?

*Axel* Yes, I met him in Vienna and we became good friends, as it's called

*Bertha*. You know that he is on the jury?

*Axel* And then what?

*Bertha* Well—now you'll be angry, I know you will

*Axel* You know it? Don't prove it, then

*Bertha* [*Coaxing*] You wouldn't make a sacrifice for your wife, would you?

*Axel* Go begging? No, I don't want to do that

*Bertha* Not for me? You'll get in anyway, but for your wife!

*Axel* Don't ask me

*Bertha* I should really never ask you for anything!

*Axel* Yes, for things that I can do without sacrificing—

*Bertha* Your man's pride!

*Axel* Let it go at that

*Bertha* But I would sacrifice my woman's pride if I could help you

*Axel* You women have no pride

*Bertha* Axel!

*Axel* Well, well, pardon, pardon!

*Bertha* You must be jealous I don't believe you would really like it if I were accepted at the salon

*Axel* Nothing would make me happier Believe me, *Bertha*

*Bertha* Would you be happy, too, if I were accepted and you were refused?

*Axel* I must feel and see [*Puts his hand over his heart*] No, that would be decidedly disagreeable, decidedly In the first place, because I paint better than you do, and because—

*Bertha* [*Walking up and down*] Speak out Because I am a woman!

*Axel* Yes, just that It may seem strange, but to me it's as if you women were intruding and plundering where we have fought for so long while you sat by the fire Forgive me, *Bertha*, for talking like this, but such thoughts have occurred to me

*Bertha* Has it ever occurred to you that you're exactly like all other men?

*Axel* Like all others? I should hope so!

*Bertha* And you have become so superior lately You didn't use to be like that

*Axel* It must be because I am superior! Doing something that we men have never done before!

*Bertha* What! What are you saying! Shame on you!

*Willmer* There, there, good friends! No, but, dear friends—*Bertha*, control yourself [*He gives her a look which she tries to make out*]

*Bertha* [*Changing*] Axel, let's be friends! And hear me a moment Do you think that my position in your house—for it is yours—is agreeable to me? You support me, you pay for my studying at Julian's, while your yourself cannot afford instruction Don't you think I see how you sit and wear out yourself and your talent on these pot-boiling drawings, and are able to paint only in leisure moments? You haven't been able to afford models for yourself, while you pay mine five hard-earned francs an hour You don't know how good—how noble—how sacrificing you are, and also you don't know how I suffer to see you toil so for me Oh, Axel, you can't know how I feel my position What am I to you? Of what use am I in your house? Oh, I blush when I think about it!

*Axel* What, what, what! Aren't you my wife?

*Bertha* Yes, but—

*Axel* Well, then?

*Bertha* But you support me

*Axel* Well, isn't that the right thing to do?

*Bertha* It was formerly—according to the old scheme of marriage, but we weren't

to have it like that We were to be comrades

*Axel* What talk! Isn't a man to support his wife?

*Bertha* I don't want it And you, Axel, you must help me I'm not your equal when it's like that, but I could be if you would humble yourself once, just once! Don't think that you are alone in going to one of the jury to say a good word for another. If it were for yourself, it would be another matter, but for me—Forgive me! Now I beg of you as nicely as I know how Lift me from my humiliating position to your side, and I'll be so grateful I shall never trouble you again with reminding you of my position Never, Axel!

*Axel* Don't ask me, you know how weak I am

*Bertha* [*Embracing him*] Yes, I shall ask you—beg of you, until you fulfil my prayer Now, don't look so proud, but be human! So! [*Kisses him*]

*Axel* [*To WILLMER*] Look here, Gaga, don't you think that women are terrible tyrants?

*Willmer* [*Pained*] Yes, and especially when they are submissive

*Bertha* See, now, the sky is clear again You'll go, won't you, Axel? Get on your black coat now, and go Then come home, and we'll strike out together for something to eat

*Axel* How do you know that Roubey is receiving now?

*Bertha* Don't you think that I made sure of that?

*Axel* What a schemer you are!

*Bertha* [*Takes a black cutaway coat from wardrobe*] Well, one would never get anywhere without a little wire-pulling, you know Here's your black coat So!

*Axel* Yes But this is awful What am I to say to the man?

*Bertha* H'm Oh, you'll hit on something on the way Say that—that—that your wife—no—that you're expecting a christening—

*Axel* Fie, Bertha

*Bertha* Well, say that you can get him decorated, then

*Axel* Really you frighten me, Bertha!

*Bertha* Say what you please, then Come, now, and I'll fix your hair so you'll be presentable Do you know his wife?

*Axel* No, not at all

*Bertha* [*Brushing his hair*] Then you must get an introduction to her I understand that she has great influence, but that she doesn't like women.

*Axel* What are you doing to my hair?

*Bertha* I am fixing it as they are wearing it now

*Axel* Yes, but I don't want it that way

*Bertha* Now then—that's fine Just mind me [*She goes to a chiffonier and takes out a case which contains a Russian Annae order She tries to put it in AXEL'S buttonhole*]

*Axel* No, Bertha You've gone far enough now I won't wear that decoration

*Bertha* But you accepted it

*Axel* Yes, because I couldn't decline it. But I'll never wear it

*Bertha* Do you belong to some political party that is so liberal-minded as to suppress individual freedom to accept distinctions?

*Axel* No, I don't But I belong to a circle of comrades who have promised each other not to wear their merit on their coats

*Bertha* But who have accepted salon medals!

*Axel* Which are not worn on their coats

*Bertha* What do you say to this, Gaga?

*Willmer*. As long as distinctions exist, one does one's self harm to go about with the mark of infamy, and the example no one is likely to follow Take them away for all of me—I certainly can't get them away from the others

*Axel* Yes, and when my comrades who are more deserving than I do not wear them, I would lower them by wearing the emblem

*Bertha* But it doesn't show under your overcoat No one will know, and you won't brand any one

*Willmer* Bertha is right there You'll wear your order *under* your coat, not *on* your coat

*Axel* Jesuits! When you are given a finger, you take the whole arm

[*ABEL comes in wearing fur coat and cap*]

*Bertha* Oh, here's Abel! Come on, now, and settle this controversy

*Abel* Hello, Bertha! Hello, Axel! How are you, Gaga? What's the matter?

*Bertha* Axel doesn't want to wear his

order, because he daren't on account of his comrades

*Abel* Comrades come before a wife, of course—that's an unwritten law [*She sits by the table, takes up tobacco and rolls a cigarette*]

*Bertha* [*Fastens ribbon in AXEL'S buttonhole and puts the star back in case*] He can help me without hurting any one, but I fear he would rather hurt me!

*Axel* Bertha, Bertha! But you people will drive me mad! I don't consider it a crime to wear this ribbon; nor have I taken any oath that I wouldn't do so, but at our exhibitions it's considered cowardly not to dare to make one's way without them

*Bertha* Cowardly, of course! But you're not going to take your own course this time—but mine!

*Abel* You owe it to the woman who has consecrated her life to you to be her delegate

*Axel* I feel that what you people are saying is false, but I haven't the time or energy to answer you now, but there is an answer! It's as if you were drawing a net about me while I sit absorbed in my work. I can feel the net winding about me, but my foot gets entangled when I want to kick it aside. But, you wait, if only I free my hands, I'll get out my knife and cut the meshes of your net! What were we talking about? Oh, yes, I was going to make a call. Give me my gloves and my overcoat. Good-bye, Bertha! Good-bye. Oh, yes,—where does Roubey live?

*Willmer, Abel and Bertha* [*In unison*] Sixty-five Rue des Martyrs

*Axel* Why, that's right near here!

*Bertha* Just at the corner. Thanks, Axel, for going. Does the sacrifice feel very heavy?

*Axel* I can't feel anything but that I am tired of all this talk and that it will be delightful to get out. Good-bye

[*Goes out*]

*Abel* It's too bad about Axel. It's a pity. Did you know that he is refused?

*Bertha* And I, then?

*Abel* That's not settled yet. As you wrote your own name with French spelling, you won't be reached until O

*Bertha* There's still hope for me?

*Abel* Yes, for you, but not for Axel

*Willmer* Now, we'll see something!

*Bertha* How do you know that he is refused?

*Abel* H'm, I met a "hors concours" who knew, and I was quite prepared to witness a scene when I came in here. But of course he hasn't received the notice yet

*Bertha* No, not that I know of. But, Abel, are you sure that Axel will meet Madame Roubey and not Monsieur?

*Abel* What should he see Monsieur Roubey for? He hasn't any say about it, but she is president of the Woman-Painters Protective Society

*Bertha* And I am not refused—yet?

*Abel* No, as I said, and Axel's call is bound to do good. He has a Russian order, and everything Russian is very popular in Paris just now. But it's too bad about Axel just the same

*Bertha* Too bad? Why? They haven't room for everybody on the salon walls. There are so many women refused that a man might put up with it and be made to feel it for once. But if I get in now—we'll soon hear how *he* painted my picture, how *he* has taught me, how *he* has paid for my lessons. But I shall not take any notice of that, because it isn't true

*Willmer* Well, we're bound to see something unusual happen now

*Bertha* No, I believe—granted that I am not refused—that we'll see something very usual. But nevertheless I'm afraid of the actual moment. Something tells me that things won't be right between Axel and me again

*Abel* And it was just when you were equals that things were going to be right

*Willmer* It seems to me that your position will be much more clearly defined and much pleasanter when you can sell your pictures and support yourself

*Bertha* It should be! We'll see—we'll see! [*The maid enters with a green letter*] A green letter for Axel! Here it is! Here it is! He is refused! Yes, but this is terrible, however, it will be a consolation to me if I should be refused

*Abel* But if you are not refused?

*Bertha* [*Pause*]

*Abel* You won't answer that?

*Bertha* No, I won't answer that

*Abel* Because, if you are accepted, the equality will be destroyed, as you will be his superior

*Bertha* Superior? A wife superior to her husband—her husband—oh!

*Willmer.* It's about time an example was made

*Abel* [To *BERTHA*] You were at the luncheon today? Was it interesting?

*Bertha* Oh, yes

*Willmer.* When are you going to review my book, *Abel*?

*Abel* I'm just working on it.

*Willmer* Are you going to be nice to me?

*Abel* Very nice—Well, *Bertha*, how and when will you deliver the letter?

*Bertha* [Walking about] That is just what I am thinking about. If he hasn't met Madame Roubey, and if he hasn't carried out our plan, he will hardly do it after receiving this blow

*Abel* [Rising] I don't think *Axel* is so base as to revenge himself on you

*Bertha* Base? Such talk! Didn't he go just now when I wanted him to, because I am his wife? Do you think he would ever have gone for any one else?

*Abel* Would you like it if he had done it for some one else?

*Bertha* Good-bye to you—you must go now, before he returns!

*Abel* That's what I think. Good-bye, *Bertha*

*Willmer* Yes, we had better get away. Good-bye for now

[The MAID enters and announces  
MRS HALL]

*Bertha* Who? Mrs Hall? Who can that be?

*Abel and Willmer.* Good-bye, *Bertha*

[They go out. MRS HALL comes in. She is flashy though carelessly dressed. She looks like an adventuress.]

*Mrs Hall* I don't know that I have the honor to be known to you, but you are Mrs Alberg, née Alund, are you not?

*Bertha* Yes, I'm Mrs Alberg. Won't you sit down?

*Mrs Hall* My name is Hall. [Sits] Oh, my lord, but I'm so tired! I have walked up so many stairs—oh-ho-ho-ho, I believe I'll faint!

*Bertha* How can I be of service to you?

*Mrs Hall* You know Doctor Östermark, don't you?

*Bertha* Yes, he's an old friend of mine

*Mrs Hall* An old friend. Well, you see,

dear Mrs. Alberg, I was married to him once, but we separated. I am his divorced wife.

*Bertha* Oh! He has never told me about that

*Mrs Hall* Oh, people don't tell such things

*Bertha* He told me he was a widower.

*Mrs Hall* Well, you were a young girl then, and I suppose he isn't so anxious to have it known anyway.

*Bertha* And I who have always believed that Doctor Östermark was an honorable man!

*Mrs. Hall* [Sarcastic] Yes, he's a good one! He is a real gentleman, I must say

*Bertha* Well, but why do you tell me all this?

*Mrs. Hall* Just wait, my dear Mrs. Alberg—wait and you shall hear. You are a member of the society, aren't you?

*Bertha* Yes, I am

*Mrs Hall* Just so, only wait now.

*Bertha* Did you have any children?

*Mrs. Hall.* Two—two daughters, Mrs. Alberg

*Bertha* That's another matter! And he left you in want?

*Mrs Hall* Just wait now! He gave us a small allowance, not enough for the rent even. And now that the girls are grown up and about to start in life, now he writes us that he is a bankrupt and that he can't send us more than half the allowance. Isn't that nice, just now, when the girls are grown up and are going out into life?

*Bertha* We must look into this. He'll be here in a few days. Do you know that you have the law on your side and that the courts can force him to pay? And he shall be forced to do so. Do you understand? So, he can bring children into the world and then leave them empty-handed with the poor, deserted mother. Oh, he'll find out something very different! Will you give me your address?

*Mrs Hall* [Gives her card] You are so good, Mrs Alberg. And you won't be vexed with me if I ask a little favor of you?

*Bertha* You can depend on me entirely. I shall write the secretary immediately—

*Mrs Hall* Oh, you're so good, but before the secretary can answer, I and my poor children will probably be thrown out into the street. Dear Mrs Alberg, you couldn't

lend me a trifle—just wait—a trifle of twenty francs?

*Bertha* No, dear lady, I haven't any money. My husband supports me for the time being, and you may be sure that I'm reminded of the fact. It's bitter to eat the bread of charity when one is young, but better times are coming for me too.

*Mrs Hall* My dear, good Mrs Alberg, you must not refuse me. If you do, I am a lost woman. Help me, for heaven's sake.

*Bertha* Are you terribly in need?

*Mrs Hall* And you ask me that!

*Bertha* I'll let you have this money as a loan [*She goes to chiffonier*] Twenty, forty, sixty, eighty—lacking twenty. What did I do with it? H'm luncheon, of course! [*She writes in account-book*] Paints twenty, incidentals twenty—there you are.

*Mrs Hall* Thank you, my good Mrs Alberg, thanks, dear lady.

*Bertha* There, there. But I can't give you any more time today. So, good-bye, and depend on me.

*Mrs Hall* [*Uncertain*] Just a moment now.

*Bertha* [*Listening without*] No, you must go now.

*Mrs Hall* Just a moment. What was I going to say?—Well, it doesn't matter.

[*Goes out. BERTHA is alone for a moment, when she hears AXEL coming. She hides the green letter in her pocket.*]

*Bertha* Back already? Well, did you meet her—him?

*Axel* I didn't meet him, but her, which was much better. I congratulate you.

*Bertha* Your picture is already accepted!

*Bertha* Oh, no! What are you saying? And yours?

*Axel* It isn't decided yet—but it will surely go through, too.

*Bertha* Are you sure of that?

*Axel* Of course—

*Bertha* Oh, I'm accepted! Good, how good! But why don't you congratulate me?

*Axel* Haven't I? I'm quite sure that I said, "I congratulate you!" For that matter, one mustn't sell the skin before the bear is killed. To get into the salon isn't anything. It's just a toss-up. It can even depend on what letter one's name begins with. You come in O, as you spelled

your name in French. When the lettering starts with M it's always easier.

*Bertha* So, you wish to say that perhaps I got in because my name begins with O?

*Axel* Not on account of that alone.

*Bertha* And if you are refused, it's because your name begins with A.

*Axel* Not exactly that alone, but it might be on that account.

*Bertha* Look here, I don't think you're as honorable as you would seem. You are jealous.

*Axel* Why should I be, when I don't know what has happened to me yet?

*Bertha* But when you do know?

*Axel* What? [*BERTHA takes out letter. AXEL puts his hand to his heart and sits in a chair.*] What! [*Controls himself.*] That was a blow I had not expected. That was most disagreeable!

*Bertha* Well, I suppose I'll have to help you now.

*Axel* You seem to be filled with malicious delight, *Bertha*. Oh, I feel that a great hate is beginning to grow in here [*Indicating his breast.*]

*Bertha* Perhaps I look delighted because I've had a success, but when one is tied to a man who cannot rejoice in another's good fortune, it's difficult to sympathize with his misfortune.

*Axel* I don't know why, but it seems as if we had become enemies now. The strife of position has come between us, and we can never be friends any more.

*Bertha* Can't your sense of justice bend and recognize me as the abler, the victorious one in the strife?

*Axel* You are not the abler.

*Bertha* The jury must have thought so, however.

*Axel* But surely you know that I paint better than you do.

*Bertha* Are you so sure of that?

*Axel* Yes, I am. But for that matter—you worked under better conditions than I. You didn't have to do any pot-boiling, you could go to the studio, you had models, and you were a woman!

*Bertha* Yes, now I'll hear how I have lived on you—

*Axel* Between ourselves, yes, but the world won't know unless you go and tell it yourself.

*Bertha* Oh, the world knows that already.



But tell me, why don't you suffer when a comrade, a man comrade, is accepted, although he has less merit than you?

*Axel* I'll have to think about that. You see our feeling toward you women has never been critical—we've taken you as a matter of course, and so I've never thought about our relations as against each other. Now when the shoe pinches, it strikes me that we are not comrades, for this experience makes me feel that you women do not belong here. [*Indicating the studio*] A comrade is a more or less loyal competitor, we are enemies. You women have been lying down in the rear while we attacked the enemy. And now, when we have set and supplied the table, you pounce down upon it as if you were in your own home!

*Bertha* Oh, fie, have we ever been allowed in the conflict?

*Axel* You have always been allowed, but you have never wanted to take part, or haven't been able to do so in our domain, where you are now breaking in. Technic had to be put through its whole development and completion by us before you entered. And now you buy the centurions' work for ten francs an hour in a studio, and with money that we have acquired by our work.

*Bertha* You are not honorable now, *Axel*.

*Axel* When was I honorable? When I allowed you to use me like an old shoe? But now you are my superior—and now I can't strive to be honorable any longer. Do you know that this adversity will also change our economic relations? I cannot think of painting any more, but must give up my life's dream and become a pot-boiler in earnest.

*Bertha* You needn't do that, when I can sell, I will support myself.

*Axel* For that matter, what sort of an alliance have we gone into? Marriage should be built on common interests, ours is built on opposing interests.

*Bertha* You can work all that out by yourself, I'm going out for dinner now, —are you coming?

*Axel* No, I want to be alone with my unhappiness.

*Bertha* And I want company for my happiness—But we have invited people to come here for the evening—that won't do now, with your misery, will it?

*Axel* It isn't a very brilliant prospect, but there's no way out. Let them come.

*Bertha* [*Dressing to go out*] But you must be here, or it will look as if you were cowardly.

*Axel* I'll be with you, don't worry—but give me a bit of money before you go.

*Bertha* We've reached the end of our cash.

*Axel* The end?

*Bertha* Yes, money comes to an end too!

*Axel* Can you lend me ten francs?

*Bertha* [*Taking out pocketbook*] Ten francs? Yes, indeed, if I have it. Here you are. Won't you come along? Tell me. They'll think it rather strange!

*Axel* And play the defeated lion before the triumphant chariot? No, indeed, I'll need my time to learn my part for this evening's performance.

*Bertha* Good-bye then.

*Axel* Good-bye, *Bertha*. Let me ask you one thing.

*Bertha* What then?

*Axel* Don't come home intoxicated. It would be more disagreeable today than ever.

*Bertha*. Does it concern you how I come home?

*Axel* Well, I feel sort of responsible for you, as for a relative, considering that you bear the same name that I do, and besides it is still disgusting to me to see a woman intoxicated.

*Bertha* Why is it any more disgusting than to see a man intoxicated?

*Axel* Yes, why? Perhaps because you don't bear being seen without a disguise.

*Bertha* [*Starting*] Good-bye, you old talking-machine. You won't come along?

*Axel* No!

[*BERTHA goes out; AXEL rises, takes off his cutaway to change it for working coat*]

## ACT TWO

Same scene as Act One, but there is a large table with chairs around it in middle of scene. On table there is writing material and a speaker's gavel. *AXEL* is painting. *ABEL* is sitting near him. She is smoking.

*Axel* They have finished dinner and are having their coffee now Did they drink much?

*Abel* Oh, yes, and Bertha bragged and was disagreeable

*Axel* Tell me one thing, Abel, are you my friend, or not?

*Abel* H'm—I don't know.

*Axel* Can I trust you?

*Abel* No—you can't

*Axel* Why not?

*Abel* Oh, I just feel that you can't

*Axel* Tell me, Abel, you who have the common sense of a man and can be reasoned with, tell me how it feels to be a woman Is it so awful?

*Abel* [Jokingly] Yes, of course It feels like being a nigger

*Axel* That's strange Listen, Abel You know that I have a passion for equity and justice—

*Abel* I know you are a visionary—and that's why things will never go well with you

*Axel* But things go well with you—because you never feel anything?

*Abel* Yes

*Axel* Abel, have you really never had any desire to love a man?

*Abel* How silly you are!

*Axel* Have you never found anyone?

*Abel* No, men are very scarce

*Axel* H'm, don't you consider me a man?

*Abel* You! No!

*Axel* That's what I fancied myself to be

*Abel* Are you a man? You, who work for a woman and go around dressed like a woman?

*Axel* What? I, dressed like a woman?

*Abel* The way you wear your hair and go around bare-necked, while she wears stiff collars and short hair, be careful, she'll soon take your trousers away from you

*Axel* How you talk!

*Abel* And what is your position in your own house? You beg money from her, and she puts you under her guardianship No, you are not a man! But that's why she took you, when her affairs were in bad shape

*Axel* You hate Bertha, what have you against her?

*Abel* I don't know, but perhaps I, too, have been struck with that same passion for justice

*Axel* Look here Don't you believe in your great cause any longer?

*Abel* Sometimes! Sometimes not! What can one believe in any more? Sometimes it strikes me that the old ways were better As mothers we had an honored and respected position when in that way we fulfilled our duty as citizens, as housewives we were a great power, and to bring up a family was not an ignominious occupation Give me a cognac, Axel We have talked so much

*Axel* [Getting cognac] Why do you drink?

*Abel* I don't know If one could only find the exceptional man!

*Axel* What sort would that be?

*Abel* The man who rules a woman!

*Axel* Well, and if you found one?

*Abel* Then I would—as they say—fall in love with him Think if this whole noise were *blague* Think!

*Axel* No, there is surely life, motion in the movement, whatever it is

*Abel* Yes, there's so much motion—forward and backward! And a good deal of folly can come of the "motion," if they only get the majority for it

*Axel* If it turns out that way, then you've made a damned lot of noise uselessly, for now it's beginning to be loathsome to live

*Abel* We make so much noise that we make your heads reel That's the trouble! Well, Axel, your position will be freer now that Bertha has been able to sell

*Axel* Sell! Has she sold a picture?

*Abel* Don't you know that? The small picture with the apple-tree

*Axel* No, she hasn't said anything about it When did it happen?

*Abel* Day before yesterday Don't you know about it? Well, then she intends to surprise you with the money

*Axel* Surprise me? She takes care of the cash herself

*Abel* So! Then it will—Hush, she is coming [BERTHA comes in]

*Bertha* [To AXEL] Oh, good evening, are you here? What made you leave us?

*Abel* I thought it was tiresome

*Bertha* Yes, there is no fun in rejoicing for others!

*Abel* No!

*Bertha* [To AXEL] And you sit diligently niggling, I see

*Axel* Yes, I'm daubing away  
*Bertha* Let me see! That's very good indeed—but the left arm is far too long  
*Axel* Do you think so?  
*Bertha* Think so? Can't I see that it is? Give me the brush and— [*She takes brush*]  
*Axel* No, let me alone Aren't you ashamed?  
*Bertha* What's that?  
*Axel* [*Vexed*] Shame, I said [*Rises*] Are you trying to teach me how to paint?  
*Bertha* Why not?  
*Axel* Because you have still much to learn from me But I can learn nothing from you  
*Bertha* It seems to me that the gentleman is not very respectful to his wife One should bear in mind the respect one owes to —  
*Abel* Now you're old-fashioned What particular respect does a man owe a woman if they are to be equals?  
*Bertha* [*To ABEL*] So you think it's all right for a man to be coarse with his wife?  
*Abel* Yes, when she is impudent to him  
*Axel* That's right! Tear each other's eyes out!  
*Abel* Not at all! The whole thing is too insignificant for that  
*Axel* Don't say that Look here, Bertha, considering that our economic condition is to undergo a change from now on, won't you be so good as to let me see the account-book?  
*Bertha* What a noble revenge for being refused!  
*Axel* What revenge? What has the account-book got to do with my being turned down at the salon? Give me the key to the chiffonier  
*Bertha* [*Feeling in her pocket*] Very well H'm! That's strange! I thought I just had it  
*Axel* Find it!  
*Bertha* You speak in such a commanding tone I don't like that  
*Axel* Come now, find the key  
*Bertha* [*Looking here and there in the room*] Yes, but I can't understand it, I can't find it It must be lost some way  
*Axel* Are you sure that you haven't got it?  
*Bertha* Absolutely sure  
 [*AXEL rings, after a moment the MAID comes in*]

*Axel* [*To MAID*] Go fetch a locksmith.  
*Maid* A locksmith?  
*Axel* Yes, a smith who can pick a lock  
 [*BERTHA gives the MAID a look*]  
*Maid* Right away, monsieur  
 [*MAID goes out AXEL changes his coat, discovers the order on the lapel, tears it off and throws it on the table*]  
*Axel* Pardon me, ladies!  
*Bertha* [*Mildly*] Don't mind us Are you going out?  
*Axel* I am going out  
*Bertha* Aren't you going to stay for the meeting?  
*Axel* No, I am not!  
*Bertha* Yes, but they will think that very discourteous  
*Axel* Let them I have more important things to do than listening to the drivel of you women  
*Bertha* [*Worried*] Where are you going?  
*Axel* I don't need to account for myself, as I don't ask you to account for your actions  
*Bertha* You won't forget that we have invited guests for the masquerade tomorrow evening?  
*Axel* Guests? That's true, tomorrow evening H'm!  
*Bertha* It won't do to postpone it when both Östermark and Carl have arrived today, and I have asked them to come  
*Axel* So much the better!  
*Bertha* And now come home early enough to try on your costume  
*Axel* My costume? Yes, of course; I am to take the part of a woman  
 [*The MAID enters*]  
*Maid* The smith hasn't time now but he'll come within two hours  
*Axel* He hasn't time, eh? Well, perhaps the key will turn up anyway However, I must be off now Good-bye  
*Bertha* [*Very mild*] Good-bye then Don't come home late  
*Axel* I don't know just what I will do. Good-bye  
 [*ABEL nods good-bye, AXEL goes out*]  
*Abel* How very cocky his lordship was!  
*Bertha* Such impudence! Do you know, I had a good mind to tame him, break him so that he'd come back crawling to me  
*Abel* Yes, that tweak the salon disap-

pointment gave him doesn't seem to have taken all the spunk out of him Bertha, tell me, have you ever loved that clown?

*Bertha* Loved him? I liked him very much because he was nice to me But he is so silly and—when he nags as he did just now, I feel that I could hate him Think of it, it's already around that he painted my picture!

*Abel* Well, if it's gone as far as that, then you must do something éclatant

*Bertha* If I only knew how!

*Abel* I'm usually inventive Let me see Look here, why couldn't you have his refused picture brought home just as all your friends have gathered here?

*Bertha* No, that would look as if I wanted to triumph No, that would be too terrible

*Abel* Yes, but if I should have it done? Or Gaga, that would be better still It would be sent here in Axel's name by the porter It's got to come home anyway, and it's no secret that it was refused

*Bertha* No, but you know—

*Abel* What? Hasn't he spread false reports, and haven't you the right to defend yourself?

*Bertha* I would like it to happen very much, but I don't want to have anything to do with the doing of it I want to be able to stand and swear that I am quite clean and innocent

*Abel* You shall be able to do so I'll attend to it

*Bertha* What do you think he wanted the account-book for? He has never asked to see it before Do you think he has some scheme in his head about it?

*Abel* Ye-es! Doubtless He wants to see if you've accounted for the three hundred francs you got for your picture

*Bertha* What picture?

*Abel* The one you sold to Madame Roubey

*Bertha* How do you know about that?

*Abel* The whole crowd knows about it

*Bertha* And Axel, too?

*Abel* Yes I happened to mention it because I thought he knew It was stupid of you not to tell him

*Bertha* Does it concern him if I sell a—

*Abel* Yes, in a way, of course it concerns him

*Bertha* Well, then, I will explain that I didn't want to give him another disappointment after he had already had the unhappiness of seeing me accepted at the salon

*Abel* Strictly speaking, he has nothing to do with your earnings, as you have a marriage compact, and you have every reason to be tight with him Just to establish a precedent, buck up and stand your own ground when he returns with his lecture tonight

*Bertha* Oh, I know how to take care of him But—another matter How are we to treat the Östermark case?

*Abel* Östermark—yes, he is my great enemy You had better let me take care of him We have an old account that is still unsettled, he and I Calm yourself on that score I'll make him yield, for we have the law on our side

*Bertha* What do you intend to do?

*Abel* Invite Mrs Hall and her two daughters here for tomorrow night, and then we will find out how he takes it

*Bertha* No, indeed, no scandal in my house!

*Abel* Why not? Can you deny yourself such a triumph? If it's war, one must kill one's enemies, not just wound them And now it is war Am I right?

*Bertha* Yes, but a father, and his wife and daughters whom he has not seen for eighteen years!

*Abel* Well, he'll have a chance to see them now

*Bertha* You're terrible, Abel!

*Abel* I'm a little stronger than you, that's all Marriage must have softened you Do you live as married people, h'm?

*Bertha* How foolish you are!

*Abel* You have irritated Axel, you have trampled on him But he can yet bite your heel

*Bertha* Do you think he would dare to do anything?

*Abel* I believe he'll create a scene when he comes home

*Bertha* Well, I shall give him as good as he sends—

*Abel* If you only can! But that business about the chiffonier key—that was foolish, very foolish

*Bertha* Perhaps it was foolish But he

will be nice enough again after he has had an airing I know him

[*The MAID comes in with a package*]

*Maid* A messenger brought this costume for monsieur

*Bertha*. Very well, let me have it That's fine!

*Maid* But it must be for madame, as it's a lady's costume

*Bertha* No, that's all right It's for monsieur

*Maid* But, heavens! is monsieur to wear dresses too?

*Bertha* Why not, when we have to wear them? But you may leave us now

[*MAID goes out BERTHA opens bundle and takes out Spanish costume*]

*Abel* But that is certainly well thought out Oh, it's beautiful to avenge anyone's stupidities

[*WILLMER comes in with a messenger, who carries a package WILLMER is dressed in black frock coat with lapels faced with white, a flower in buttonhole, knee breeches, red cravat, and turned over cuffs*]

*Willmer* Good evening, are you alone? Here are the candles and here are the bottles One chartreuse and two vermouth, here are two packages of tobacco and the rest of the things

*Bertha*. Well, but you are a good boy, Gaga!

*Willmer* And here is the receipted bill

*Bertha* Is it paid? Then you have spent money again?

*Willmer* We'll have plenty of time to settle that But you must hurry now, as the old lady will soon be here

*Bertha* Then be good enough to open the bottles while I fix the candles

*Willmer* Of course I will

[*BERTHA opens package of candles at table, WILLMER stands beside her, taking the wrappers from bottles*]

*Abel* You look quite family-like as you stand there together You might have made quite a nice little husband, Gaga

[*WILLMER puts his arm around BERTHA and kisses her on the neck BERTHA turns on WILLMER and slaps his face*]

*Bertha* Aren't you ashamed, you little hornet! What are you up to, anyway?

*Abel* If you can stand that, Gaga, then you can stand the knife

*Willmer* [*Angry*] Little hornet? Don't you know who I am? Don't you know that I'm an author of rank?

*Bertha* You! who write nothing but trash!

*Willmer* It wasn't trash when I wrote for you

*Bertha* You only copied what we said, that was all!

*Willmer* Take care, *Bertha* You know that I can ruin you!

*Bertha* So, you threaten, you little Fido! [*To ABEL*] Shall we give the boy a spanking?

*Abel* Think what you are saying!

*Willmer* So! I've been a little Fido, who has been lying on your skirt, but don't forget that I can bite too

*Bertha* Let me see your teeth!

*Willmer* No, but you shall feel them!

*Bertha* Very well, come on then! Come!

*Abel* Now, now, be quiet before you go too far

*Willmer* [*To BERTHA*] Do you know what one has a right to say about a married woman who accepts presents from a young bachelor?

*Bertha* Presents?

*Willmer*. You've accepted presents from me for two years

*Bertha* Presents! You should have a thrashing, you lying little snipe, always hanging around the petticoats! Don't you suppose I can squelch you?

*Willmer* [*With a shrug*] Perhaps

*Bertha* And you dare throw a shadow on a woman's honor!

*Willmer* Honor! H'm! Does it do you any honor to have had me buy part of the household things which you have charged up to your husband?

*Bertha* Leave my house, you scamp!

*Willmer* Your house! Among comrades one is not careful, but among enemies one must count every hair! And you shall be compelled to go over the accounts with me—adventuress—depend on that! [*Goes out*]

*Abel* You will suffer for this foolishness! To let a friend leave you as an enemy—that's dangerous

*Bertha* Oh, let him do what he likes.

He dared to kiss me! He dared to remind me that I'm a woman

*Abel* Do you know, I believe a man will always have that in mind. You have been playing with fire

*Bertha* Fire! Can one ever find a man and a woman who can live like comrades without danger of fire?

*Abel* No, I don't think so, as long as there are two sexes there is bound to be fire

*Bertha* Yes, but that must be done away with!

*Abel* Yes—it must be—try it!

*[The MAID comes in, she is bursting with laughter]*

*MAID* There is a lady out here who calls herself—Richard—Richard Wahlstrom!

*Bertha* *[Going toward door]* Oh! Richard is here

*Abel* Oh, well then, if she has come, we can open the meeting. And now to see if we can disentangle your skein

*Bertha* Disentangle it, or cut it!

*Abel* Or get caught in it!

### ACT THREE

*Same scene The hanging-lamp is lighted Moonlight streams in, lighting up the studio window There is a fire in the stove BERTHA and the MAID are discovered BERTHA is dressed in a negligée with lace She is sewing on the Spanish costume The MAID is cutting out a frill*

*Bertha* There's no fun sitting up waiting for one's husband

*MAID* Do you think it is more fun for him to sit and wait for madame? This is the first time that he has been out alone—

*Bertha* Well, what does he do when he sits here alone?

*MAID* He paints on pieces of wood

*Bertha* On wooden panels?

*MAID* Yes, he has big piles of wood that he paints on

*Bertha* H'm! Tell me one thing, Ida, has monsieur ever been familiar with you?

*MAID* Oh, never! No, he is such a proper gentleman

*Bertha* Are you sure?

*MAID* *[Positive]* Does madame think that I am such a —

*Bertha*—What time is it now?

*MAID* It must be along toward twelve

*Bertha* Very well. Then you may go to bed

*MAID*. Won't you be afraid to be alone with all these skeletons?

*Bertha* I, afraid?—Hush, someone is coming through the gate—so, good night to you

*MAID* Good night, Madame. Sleep well.

*[Goes out BERTHA alone, she puts the work away, throws herself on the couch, arranges lace on her gown, then she jumps up, turns down the lamp to half-light, then returns to couch and pretends to sleep A pause before AXEL enters]*

*AXEL* Is anyone here? Are you here, Bertha? *[BERTHA is silent AXEL goes to her]* Are you asleep?

*Bertha* *[Softly]* Ah, is it you, my friend? Good evening! I was lying here and fell asleep, and I had such a bad dream

*AXEL* Now you are lying, for I saw you thro' the window from the garden when you took this pose *[BERTHA jumps up]*

*AXEL* *[Quietly]* And we don't want any seductive scenes in nightgowns, nor any melodramas. Be calm and listen to what I am going to tell you

*[He sits down in the middle of the room]*

*Bertha* What have you got to tell me?

*AXEL* A whole lot of things, but I shall begin with the ending. We must dissolve this concubinage

*Bertha* What? *[Throwing herself on the couch]* Oh, my God, what am I not made to live through!

*AXEL* No hysteria, or I will empty the water bottle on your laces!

*Bertha* This is your revenge because I defeated you in an open competition!

*AXEL* That has no connection with this matter

*Bertha* You have never loved me!

*AXEL* Yes, I have loved you, that was my only motive for marrying you. But why did you marry me? Because you were hard up, and because you had green sickness!

*Bertha* It's fortunate that no one can hear us

*AXEL* It would be no misfortune if anyone did hear us. I've treated you like a

comrade, with unlimited trust, and I've even made small sacrifices that you know about—Has the locksmith been here yet?

*Bertha* No, he didn't come

*Axel* It doesn't matter—I have looked over your accounts

*Bertha*. So, you've been spying in my book, have you?

*Axel* The household account-book is common property. You have entered false expenses and neglected to put down some of the income

*Bertha* Can I help it if we are not taught bookkeeping at school?

*Axel* Nor are we. And as far as your bringing-up is concerned, you had things much better than I did, you went to a seminary, but I only went to a grade school

*Bertha* It's not books that bring one up—

*Axel* No, it's the parents! But it's strange that they can't teach their daughters to be honorable—

*Bertha* Honorable! I wonder if the majority of criminals are not to be found among men?

*Axel* The majority of the punished, you should say, but of ninety-nine per cent of criminal men one can ask with the judge, "Où est la femme?" But—to return to you. You have lied to me all the way through, and finally you have cheated me. For instance, you put down twenty francs for paints instead of for a twenty-franc luncheon at Marguery

*Bertha* That's not true; the luncheon only cost twelve francs

*Axel* That is to say, you put eight in your pocket. Then you have received three hundred francs for the picture that you sold

*BERTHA* "What a woman earns by her work, she also controls" That's what the law states.

*Axel* That's not a paradox, then? Not monomania?

*Bertha* No, it seems not.

*Axel* Of course, we must not be petty, you control your earnings, and have controlled mine, in an unspeakable way, still, don't you think that, as comrades, you should have told me about the sale?

*Bertha* That didn't concern you

*Axel*. It didn't concern me? Well, then

it only remains for me to bring suit for divorce

*Bertha* Divorce! Do you think I would stand the disgrace of being a divorced wife? Do you think that I will allow myself to be driven from my home, like a servant-maid who is sent away with her trunk?

*Axel* I could throw you out into the street if I wished, but I shall do a more humane thing and get the divorce on the grounds of incompatibility of temperament

*Bertha* If you can talk like that, you have never loved me!

*Axel* Tell me, why do you think I asked for your hand?

*Bertha*. Because you wanted me to love you

*Axel* Oh, holy, revered, uncorruptible stupidity—yes! I could accuse you of counterfeiting, for you have gone into debt to Willmer and made me responsible for the amount

*Bertha* Ah, the little insect! he has been talking, has he?

*Axel* I just left him after paying him the three hundred and fifty francs for which you were indebted to him. But we mustn't be small about money matters, and we have more serious business to settle. You have allowed this scoundrel partially to pay for my household, and in doing so you have completely ruined my reputation. What have you done with the money?

*Bertha* The whole thing is a lie

*Axel* Have you squandered it on luncheon and dinner parties?

*Bertha* No, I have saved it, and that's something you have no conception of, spendthrift!

*Axel* Oh, you saving soul! That negligée cost two hundred francs, and my dressing-gown cost twenty-five

*Bertha* Have you anything else to say to me?

*Axel* Nothing else, except that you must think about supporting yourself from now on. I don't care to decorate wooden panels any more and let you reap the earnings

*Bertha* A-ha, you think you can so easily get out of the duty that you made yourself responsible for when you fooled me into becoming your wife? You shall see!

*Axel*. Now that I've had my eyes opened,



the past is beginning to take on another color. It seems to me almost as if you conjured that courtship of ours, it seems almost as if I had been the victim of what you women call seduction, it now seems to me as if I had fallen into the hands of an adventuress, who lured my money away from me in a *hôtel garni*, it seems almost as if I had lived in vice ever since I was united with you! [*Rising*] And now, as you stand there with your back turned to me and I see your neck with your short hair, it is—yes, it is exactly as if—ugh!—as if you were Judith and had given your body to be able to behead me! Look, there is the dress I was going to wear, that you wished to humiliate me with. Yes, you felt that it was debasing to wear those things, and thought it disguised your desire to irritate, —this low-cut bodice and the corsets which were to advertise your woman's wares. No, I return your love-token and shake off the fetters. [*He throws down the wedding-ring* BERTHA looks at him in wonderment AXEL pushes back his hair] You didn't want to see that my forehead is higher than yours, so I let my hair conceal it, so as not to humble and frighten you. But now I am going to humble you, and since you were not willing to be my equal when I lowered myself to your level, you shall be my inferior, which you are.

Bertha And all this—all this noble revenge because you were my inferior!

Axel Yes, I was your inferior, even when I painted your picture!

Bertha Did you paint my picture? If you repeat that, I'll strike you.

Axel Yes, your kind, who despise raw strength, are always the first to resort to it. Go ahead and strike.

Bertha [*Advancing*] Don't you think I can measure strength with you?

[AXEL takes both her wrists in one hand]

Axel No, I don't think so. Are you convinced now that I am also your physical superior? Bend, or I'll break you!

Bertha Do you dare strike me?

Axel Why not? I know of only one reason why I should not strike you.

Bertha What's that?

Axel Because you are morally irresponsible.

Bertha [*Trying to free herself*] Let go!

Axel. When you have begged for forgiveness! So, down on your knees. [*He forces her down with one hand*] There, now look up to me, from below! That's your place, that you yourself have chosen.

Bertha [*Giving in*] Axel, Axel, I don't know you any more. Are you he who swore to love me, who begged to carry me, to lift me?

Axel It is I. I was strong then, and believed I had the power to do it, but you sapped my strength while my tired head lay in your lap, you sucked my best blood while I slept—and still there was enough left to subdue you. But get up and let us end this declaiming. We have business to talk over! [BERTHA rises, sits on couch and weeps] Why are you crying?

Bertha I don't know! Because I'm weak, perhaps.

[BERTHA'S attitude and actions are those of complete surrender]

Axel You see—I was your strength. When I took what was mine, you had nothing left. You were a rubber ball that I blew up, when I let go of you, you fell together like an empty bag.

Bertha [*Without looking up*] I don't know whether you are right or not, but since we have quarreled, my strength has left me. Axel, will you believe me,—I have never experienced before what I now feel —

Axel So? What do you feel, then?

Bertha I can't say it! I don't know whether it is—love, but —

Axel What do you mean by love? Isn't it a quiet longing to eat me alive once more? You begin to love me! Why didn't you do that before, when I was good to you? Goodness is stupidity, though, let us be evil! Isn't that right?

Bertha Be a little evil, rather, but don't be weak. [*Rises*] Axel, forgive me, but don't desert me. Love me! Oh, love me!

Axel It is too late! Yesterday, this morning, I would have fallen before you as you stand there now, but it's too late now.

Bertha Why is it too late now?

Axel Because tonight I have broken all ties, even the last.

Bertha [*Taking his hands*] What do you mean?



*Axel* I have been untrue to you.

*Bertha.* [*Falls in a heap*] Oh!

*Axel.* It was the only way to tear myself loose

*Bertha.* [*Collecting herself*] Who was she?

*Axel* A woman—— [*Pause*]

*Bertha* How did she look?

*Axel* Like a woman! With long hair and high breasts, et cetera— Spare yourself

*Bertha* Do you think I am jealous of one of that kind?

*Axel* One of that kind, two of that kind, many of that kind!

*Bertha* [*Gasping*] And tomorrow our friends are invited here! Do you want to create a scandal and call in the invitations?

*Axel* No, I don't want to be mean in my revenge Tomorrow we'll have our friends, and the day after our ways will part.

*Bertha* Yes, our ways must part now Good night! [*Goes to door left*]

*Axel* [*Going to door right*] Good night!

*Bertha* [*Stops*] Axel!

*Axel* Yes?

*Bertha* Oh, it wasn't anything!—Yes, wait [*Goes toward AXEL with clasped hands*] Love me, Axel! Love me!

*Axel* Would you share with another?

*Bertha* [*Pause*] If only you loved me!

*Axel* No, I cannot You can't draw me to you as you used to do

*Bertha* Love me, be merciful! I am honest now, I believe, otherwise I would never humiliate myself as—as I am doing now, before a man.

*Axel* Even if I had compassion for you, I cannot call forth any love It has come to an end It is dead

*Bertha* I beg for a man's love, I, a woman, and he shoves me away from him!

*Axel* Why not? We should also have leave to say no for once, although we are not always very hard to please

*Bertha* A woman offers herself to a man and is refused!

*Axel* Feel now how millions have felt, when they have begged on their knees for the mercy of being allowed to give what the other accepts Feel it for your whole sex, and then tell them how it felt

*Bertha.* [*Rising*] Good night. The day after tomorrow, then

*Axel.* You still want the party tomorrow, then?

*Bertha* Yes, I want the party tomorrow

*Axel* Good. The day after tomorrow, then.

[*They go out, each their own way right and left.*]

## ACT FOUR

*Same scene But the glass doors leading to orchard are open The sun is still shining outside and the studio is brightly lighted The side doors are open A serving table is seen out in the orchard, on it are glasses and bottles, et cetera AXEL wears cutaway, but without the decoration, and is wearing a standing collar with four-in-hand scarf His hair is brushed straight back BERTHA wears a dark gown, cut square, with frilled fichu She has a flower on the left shoulder The MISSES HALL are extravagantly and expensively dressed BERTHA enters from orchard She is pale and has dark shadows under her eyes ABEL enters from door at back. They embrace and kiss each other.*

*Bertha* Good afternoon, and welcome.

*Abel* Good afternoon

*Bertha* And Gaga promised to come?

*Abel* Absolutely certain He was in a regretful spirit and begged forgiveness [*BERTHA straightens out her fichu*] But what is the matter with you today? Has anything happened?

*Bertha* How so? What?

*Abel* You are not like yourself. Have you—? *Bertha!* Have you——

*Bertha* Don't talk

*Abel* Your eyes are so full of color and brilliancy! What? Is it possible—? And so pale? *Bertha!*

*Bertha* I must go out to my guests

*Abel* Tell me, are Carl and Östermark here?

*Bertha* Both are out in the orchard

*Abel* And Mrs Hall and the girls?

*Bertha* Mrs Hall will come later, but the girls are in my room

*Abel* I'm afraid that our scheme of revenge will fall as flat as a pancake

*Bertha* No, not this—not this one!

[*WILLMER enters with a bouquet of flowers. He goes to BERTHA,*

*kisses her hand, and gives her the bouquet]*

*Willmer* Forgive me! For my love's sake!

*Bertha* No, not on that account, but—it doesn't matter I don't know why, but today I don't want any enemies

*[AXEL comes in BERTHA and WILLMER look distressed]*

*Axel* *[To BERTHA, not noticing WILLMER]* Pardon—if I disturb—

*Bertha* Not at all.

*Axel* I only wanted to ask if you had ordered the supper?

*Bertha* Yes, of course—as you wished.

*Axel* Very well. I only wanted to know *[Pause]*

*Abel* How festive you two look! *[BERTHA and AXEL are silent. WILLMER breaks the embarrassment by starting for the orchard]* Listen, Gaga— *[She hastens out after WILLMER.]*

*Axel* What have you ordered for the supper?

*Bertha* *[Looks at him and smiles]* Lobsters and poulet

*Axel* *[Uncertain]* What are you smiling at?

*Bertha* My thoughts

*Axel* What are you thinking then?

*Bertha* I am thinking—no, I really don't know—unless it was about the betrothal supper we had in the Gardens that spring evening when you had wooed—

*Axel* You had wooed—

*Bertha* Axel!—And now it is the last, last time It was a short summer.

*Axel* Quite short, but the sun will come again

*Bertha* Yes, for you who can find sunshine in every street

*Axel* What is there to hinder you from seeking warmth at the same fire?

*Bertha* And so we shall meet again, perhaps—some evening by street light, you mean?

*Axel* I didn't mean that—but *à la bonne heure!* That at least will be a free relation.

*Bertha* Yes, very free, especially for you

*Axel* For you, too, but pleasanter for me

*Bertha* That's a noble thought

*Axel* Now, now—don't tear open the old wounds! We were talking about the supper

And we must not forget our guests. So! *[Goes toward his room right]*

*Bertha* About the supper—yes, of course! That's what we were talking about.

*[She flies toward her room left, stirred and agitated They both go out. The scene is empty for a moment Then the MISSES HALL come in from the orchard]*

*Miss Amélie.* How very dull it is here!

*Miss Thérèse* Insufferably stupid, and our hosts are not altogether polite.

*Miss Amélie.* The hostess is especially unpleasant And the short-hair kind, too.

*Miss Thérèse.* Yes, but I understand that a lieutenant is coming—

*Miss Amélie.* Well, that's good, for these artists are a lot of free traders. Hush, here is a diplomat surely—He looks so distinguished.

*[They sit on couch. DOCTOR ÖSTERMARK comes in from the orchard; he discovers the MISSES HALL and looks at them through his pince-nez]*

*Dr. Östermark* I am honored, ladies. H'm, one meets so many of one's countrywomen here Are you artists, too? You paint, I suppose?

*Miss Amélie* No, we don't paint.

*Dr Östermark* Oh, but just a little, perhaps Here in Paris all ladies paint—themselves

*Miss Thérèse.* We don't have to

*Dr Östermark* Oh, well, you play then?

*Miss Amélie* Play?

*Dr Östermark* Oh, I don't mean playing at cards But all ladies play a little

*Miss Amélie* Evidently you are just from the country

*Dr Östermark* Yes, just from the country Can I be of any slight service to you?

*Miss Thérèse* Pardon, but we don't know with whom we have the honor—?

*Dr Östermark* You ladies have evidently just come from Stockholm In this country we can talk to each other without asking for references

*Miss Amélie* We haven't asked for references

*Dr Östermark* What do you ask, then? To have your curiosity satisfied? Well, I'm an old family physician and my name is Anderson. Perhaps I may know your names now?—Character not needed.

*Miss Thérèse* We are the Misses Hall, if that can be of any interest to the doctor

*Dr Östermark* Hall? H'm! I've surely heard that name before Pardon, pardon me a question, a somewhat countrified question—

*Miss Amélie* Don't be bashful!

*Dr Östermark* Is your father still living?

*Miss Amélie* No, he is dead

*Dr Östermark* Oh, yes Well, now that I have gone so far, there is nothing to do but continue Mr Hall was—

*Miss Thérèse* Our father was a director of the Fire Insurance Company of Göteborg

*Dr Östermark* Oh, well, then I beg your pardon Do you find Paris to your liking?

*Miss Amélie* Very! Thérèse, do you remember what I did with my shawl? Such a cold draught here! *[Rises]*

*Miss Thérèse* You left it in the orchard, no doubt

*Dr Östermark.* *[Rising]* No, don't go out Allow me to find it for you—no—sit still—just sit still

*[Goes out into orchard After a moment MRS HALL comes in from left, quite comfortable with drink, her cheeks are flaming red and her voice is uncertain]*

*Miss Amélie* Look, there's mother! And in that condition again! Heavens, why does she come here? Why did you come here, mother?

*Mrs Hall* Keep quiet! I have as much right here as you

*Miss Thérèse* Why have you been drinking again? Think if someone should come!

*Mrs Hall* I haven't been drinking What nonsense!

*Miss Amélie* We will be ruined if the doctor should come back and see you. Come, let's go in here and you can get a glass of water

*Mrs Hall* It's nice of you to treat your mother like this and say that she has been drinking, to say such a thing to your own mother!

*Miss Thérèse.* Don't talk, but go in, immediately

*[They lead her in right AXEL and CARL come in from the orchard]*

*Carl.* Well, you're looking fine, my dear Axel, and you have a manlier bearing than you used to have.

*Axel* Yes, I have emancipated myself.

*Carl* You should have done that at the start, as I did

*Axel* As you did?

*Carl* As I did Immediately I took my position as head of the family, to which place I found myself called both because of my superior mind and my natural abilities

*Axel* And how did your wife like that?

*Carl* Do you know, I forgot to ask her! But to judge by appearances, I should say that she found things as they should be They only need real men—and human beings can be made even out of women

*Axel* But at least the power should be divided?

*Carl* Power cannot be divided! Either obey or command Either you or I I preferred myself to her, and she had to adjust herself to it

*Axel* Yes, but didn't she have money?

*Carl* Not at all She didn't bring more than a silver soup-spoon to our nest But she demanded an accounting of it, and she got it She was a woman of principle, you see!— She is so good, so good, but so am I good to her I think it's really great sport to be married, what? And besides, she's such a splendid cook!

*[The MISSES HALL come in from right]*

*Axel* Let me introduce you to the Misses Hall, Lieutenant Starck

*Carl* I am very happy to make your *[gives them a look of recognition]* acquaintance

*[The young ladies seem surprised and embarrassed, they nod and go out to the orchard somewhat excited]*

*Carl* How did they get in here?

*Axel* What do you mean? They are friends of my wife's and this is the first time that they have been here. Do you know them?

*Carl* Yes, somewhat!

*Axel* What do you mean to imply?

*Carl* H'm, I met them in St Petersburg—late one night!

*Axel* Late one night?

*Carl* Yes

*Axel* Isn't there some mistake?

*Carl* No-o! There is no mistake They were very well known ladies in St. Petersburg

Axel And Bertha allows that kind in my house!

[BERTHA comes rushing in from orchard]

Bertha What does this mean? Have you insulted the young ladies?

Axel No—but—

Bertha They came out of here crying and declared that they couldn't stay in the company of you gentlemen any longer! What has happened?

Axel Do you know these young ladies?

Bertha They are my friends! Isn't that enough?

Axel Not quite enough

Bertha Not quite? Well, but if—

[DR ÖSTERMARK comes in from the orchard]

Dr Östermark What does this mean? What have you done to the little girls who ran away? I offered to help them with their wraps, but they refused to be helped and had tears in their eyes

Carl [To BERTHA] I must ask you, are they your friends?

Bertha Yes, they are! But if my protection is not sufficient, then perhaps Doctor Östermark will take them under his wing, considering that he has a certain claim to them

Carl But a mistake has been made here. You mean that I, who have had certain relations with these girls, should appear as their cavalier?

Bertha What sort of relations?

Carl Chance, such as one has with such women!

Bertha Such women? That's a lie!

Carl I'm not in the habit of lying

Dr Östermark But I don't understand what I have got to do with these young ladies

Bertha You would prefer to have nothing to do with your deserted children

Dr Östermark My children! But I don't understand

Bertha They are your two daughters—daughters of your divorced wife

Dr Östermark Since you consider that you have the right to be personal and make my affairs the subject of public discussion, I will answer you publicly. You seem to have taken the trouble to find out that I am not a widower. Good! My marriage, which was childless, was dissolved twenty years ago. Since then I have entered into

another relation, and we have a child that is just five years old. These grown girls, therefore, cannot be my children. Now you know the whole matter

Bertha But your wife—whom you threw out upon the world—

Dr Östermark No, that wasn't the case either. She walked out, or staggered, if you prefer it, and then she received half my income until at last I found out that—enough said. If you could conceive what it cost me of work and self-denial to support two establishments, you would have spared me this unpleasant moment, but your kind wouldn't consider anything like that. You needn't know any more, as it really doesn't concern you

Bertha But it would amuse me to know why your first wife left you

Dr Östermark I don't think it would amuse you to know that she was ugly, narrow, paltry, and that I was too good for her! Think now, you tender-hearted, sensitive Bertha, think if they really had been my daughters, these friends of yours and Carl's, imagine how my old heart would have been gladdened to see, after eighteen years, these children that I had borne in my arms during the long night of illness. And imagine if she, my first love, my wife, with whom life the first time became life, had accepted your invitation and come here? What a fifth act in the melodrama you wished to offer us, what a noble revenge on one who is guiltless! Thanks, old friend. Thank you for your reward for the friendship I have shown you

Bertha Reward! Yes, I know that I owe you—a fee [AXEL, CARL and the Doctor make protestations of "Oh," "Now," "Really," et cetera] I know that, I know it very well

[AXEL, CARL and Doctor say "No," "Fie," "This is going too far"]

Dr Östermark No, but I'm going to get out of here. Horrors! Yes, you are the right sort! Pardon me, Axel, but I can't help it!

Bertha [To AXEL] You're a fine man, to allow your wife to be insulted!

Axel I can understand neither your allowing yourself to insult, or to be insulted! [Music is heard from the orchard, guitar and an Italian song] The singers have arrived, perhaps you would all like to step

out and have a bit of harmony on top of all this

*[They all go out except the Doctor, who goes over to look at some drawings on wall right near door to AXEL'S room. The music outside is played softly. MRS. HALL comes in and walks unsteadily across the scene and sits in a chair. The Doctor, who does not recognize her, bows deeply.]*

Mrs. Hall What music is that out there?

Dr Östermark They are some Italians, dear lady.

Mrs Hall Yes? No doubt the ones I heard at Monte Carlo

Dr Östermark Oh, perhaps there are other Italians

Mrs Hall Well, I believe it's none other than Östermark! No one could be as quick as he in his retorts

Dr Östermark *[Stares at her]* Ah—think—there are things—that—are less dreadful than dread! It is you, Carolina! And this is the moment that for eighteen years I have been running away from, dreamed about, sought, feared, wished for, wished for that I might receive the shock and afterward have nothing to dread! *[He takes out a vial and wets his upper lip with a few drops]* Don't be afraid, it's not poison, in such little doses. It's for the heart, you see

Mrs Hall Ugh, your heart! Yes, you have so much!

Dr Östermark It's strange that two people cannot meet once every eighteen years without quarreling

Mrs Hall It was always you who quarreled!

Dr Östermark Alone? What!—Shall we stop now?—I must try to look at you. *[He takes a chair and sits down opposite MRS. HALL]* Without trembling!

Mrs Hall I've become old!

Dr Östermark That's what happens, one has read about it, seen it, felt it one's self, but nevertheless it is horrifying. I am old, too

Mrs Hall Are you happy in your new life?

Dr Östermark To tell the truth, it's one and the same thing, different, but quite the same

Mrs Hall Perhaps the old life was better, then?

Dr Östermark No, it wasn't better, as it was about the same, but it's a question if it wouldn't have seemed better now, just because it was the old life. One doesn't blossom but once, and then one goes to seed, what comes afterward is only a little aftermath. And you, how are you getting along?

Mrs Hall. *[Offended]* What do you mean?

Dr Östermark Don't misunderstand me. Are you contented with—your—lot? I mean—oh, that it should be so difficult to make one's self understood by women!

Mrs Hall Contented? H'm!

Dr Östermark Well, you were never contented. But when one is young, one always demands the first class, and then one gets the third class when one is old. Now, I understand that you told Mrs Alberg here that your girls are my children!

Mrs Hall I did? That is a lie

Dr Östermark Still untruthful, eh? In the old days, when I was foolish, I looked upon lying as a vice, but now I know it to be a natural defect. You actually believe in your lies, and that is dangerous. But never mind about that now. Are you leaving, or do you wish me to leave?

Mrs Hall *[Rising]* I will go

*[She falls back into the chair and gropes about]*

Dr Östermark What, drunk too?—I really pity you. Oh, this is most unpleasant! Dear me, I believe I'm ready to cry!—Carolina! No, I can't bear this!

Mrs Hall I am ill

Dr Östermark Yes, that's what happens when one drinks too much. But this is more bitter than I ever thought it could be. I have killed little unborn children to be able to save the mother, and I have felt them tremble in their fight against death. I have cut living muscles, and have seen the marrow flow like butter from healthy bones, but never has anything hurt me so much as this since the day you left me. Then it was as if you had gone away with one of my lungs, so I could only gasp with the other!—Oh, I feel as if I were suffocating now!

Mrs Hall Help me out of here. It's too

noisy I don't know why we came here, anyway Give me your hand

*Dr Östermark* [Leading her to door] Before it was I who asked for your hand, and it rested so heavily on me, the little delicate hand! Once it struck my face, the little delicate hand, but I kissed it nevertheless—Oh, now it is withered, and will never strike again—Ah, dolce Napoli! Joy of life, what became of it? You who were the bride of my youth!

*Mrs Hall* [In the hall door] Where is my wrap?

*Dr Östermark* [Closing door] In the hall, probably This is horrible! [Lights a cigar] Oh, dolce Napoli! I wonder if it is as delightful as it's said to be in that cholera-breeding fishing harbor *Blague*, no doubt! *Blague! Blague!* Naples—bridal couples, love, joy of life, antiquities, modernity, liberalism, conservatism, idealism, realism, naturalism,—*blague, blague*, the whole thing!

[AXEL, ABEL, WILLMER, MRS STARCK and BERTHA come in from orchard]

*Mrs Starck* What is happening to the doctor?

*Dr Östermark* Pardon, it was only a little *qui pro quo* Two strangers sneaked in here and we had to identify them

*Mrs Starck* The girls?

*Carl* Well, that has nothing to do with you I don't know why, but I seem to feel "the enemy in the air"

*Mrs Starck* Ah, you're always seeing the enemy, you dear Carl

*Carl* No, I don't see them, but I feel them

*Mrs Starck* Well, come to your friend, then, and she will defend you

*Carl* Oh, you're always so good to me

*Mrs Starck* Why shouldn't I be, when you are so good to me?

[The door at back is opened and the MAID and two men come in carrying a picture]

*Axel* What's this?

*Maid* The porter said that it must be carried into the studio, as he didn't have any room for it

*Axel* What foolishness is this? Take it out

*Maid* The mistress sent for the picture herself

*Bertha* That's not true For that matter, it's not my picture, anyway It's your master's Put it down there [The MAID and the man go out] Perhaps it isn't yours, Axel? Let's see [AXEL places himself in front of picture] Move a little so we can see

*Axel* [Gives way] It's a mistake

*Bertha* [Shrieks] What! What is this! It's a mistake! What does it mean? It's my picture, but it's Axel's number! Oh!

[She falls in a faint The DOCTOR and CARL carry her into her room left, the women follow]

*Abel* She is dying!

*Mrs Starck* Heaven help us, what is this! The poor little dear! Doctor Östermark, do something, say something—and Axel stands there crestfallen

[AXEL and WILLMER are alone]

*Axel* This is your doing

*Willmer* My doing?

[AXEL takes him by the ear]

*Axel* Yes, yours, but not altogether But I am going to give you your share [He leads him to the door, which he opens with one foot, and kicks out WILLMER with the other] Out with you!

*Willmer* I'll get even for this!

*Axel* I shall be waiting for it!

[DOCTOR and CARL come in]

*Dr Östermark* What's the trouble with the picture, anyway?

*Axel* Nothing—only that it seemed to represent sulphuric acid.

*Carl* Now tell us, are you refused, or is she?

*Axel* I am refused on her picture I wanted to help her a bit, as a good comrade, and that's why I changed the numbers

*Dr Östermark* Yes, but there is something else too She says that you don't love her any more

*Axel* She is right in that That's how it is, and tomorrow we part

*Dr Östermark and Carl* Part?

*Axel* Yes, when there are no ties to bind things, they loosen of themselves This wasn't a marriage, it was only living together, or something even worse

*Dr Östermark* There is bad air here Come, let's go

*Axel* Yes, I want to get out—out of here

[They start for the door ABEL comes in]

*Abel* What, are you leaving?

*Axel* Does that astonish you?

*Abel* Let me have a word with you

*Axel* Go on

*Abel* Don't you want to go in and see Bertha?

*Axel* No!

*Abel* What have you done to her?

*Axel* I have bent her.

*Abel* I noticed that—she is black and blue around the wrists! Look at me! I didn't think that of you Well, conqueror, triumph now!

*Axel* It's an uncertain conquest, and I don't even wish for it

*Abel* Are you sure of that? [*She leans over to AXEL, in low voice*] Bertha loves you now—now that you have bent her

*Axel* I know it But I don't love her any longer

*Abel* Won't you go in and see her?

*Axel* No, it's all over [*Takes DOCTOR'S arms*] Come!

*Abel* May I take a message to Bertha?

*Axel* No! Yes! Tell her, that I despise and abhor her.

*Abel* Good-bye, my friend

*Axel* Good-bye, my enemy.

*Abel* Enemy?

*Axel* Are you my friend?

*Abel* I don't know Both and neither I am a bastard——

*Axel* We are all that, as we are crocheted out of man and woman! Perhaps you have loved me in your way, as you wanted to separate Bertha and me

*Abel* [*Rolling a cigarette*] Loved! I wonder how it seems to love? No, I cannot love; I must be deformed—for it made me happy to see you two until the envy of deformity set me on fire Perhaps you love me?

*Axel* No, on my honor! You have been an agreeable comrade who happened to be dressed like a woman, you have never impressed me as belonging to another sex, and love, you see, can and should exist only between individuals of opposite sexes——

*Abel* Sex love, yes!

*Axel* Is there any other, then?

*Abel* I don't know! But I am to be pitied And this hate, this terrible hate! Perhaps that would disappear if you men were not so afraid to love us, if you were

not so—how shall I express it—so moral, as it's called

*Axel* But in heaven's name, be a little more lovable, then, and don't get yourselves up so that one is forced to think of the penal law whenever one looks at you.

*Abel* Do you think I'm such a fright, then?

*Axel* Well, you know, you must pardon me, but you are awful

[*BERTHA comes in*]

*Bertha* [*To AXEL*] Are you going?

*Axel* Yes, I was just about to go, but now I'll stay

*Bertha* [*Softly*] What? You——

*Axel* I shall stay in *my* home

*Bertha* In *our*—home

*Axel* No, in *mine* In my studio with my furniture

*Bertha* And I?

*Axel* You may do what you please, but you must know what you risk You see in my suit I have applied for one year's separation in bed and board Should you stay, that is to say, if you should seek me during this time, you would have to choose between imprisonment, or being considered my mistress Do you feel like staying?

*Bertha* Oh, is that the law?

*Axel* That's the law

*Bertha* You drive me out, then?

*Axel* No, but the law does

*Bertha* And you think I'll be satisfied with that?

*Axel* No, I don't, for you won't be satisfied until you have taken all the life out of me

*Bertha*. Axel! How you talk! If you knew how I—love you!

*Axel* That doesn't sound irrational, but I don't love you

*Bertha* [*Flaring up and pointing to AXEL*] Because you love her!

*Axel* No, indeed, I don't Have never loved her, and never will What incredible imagining! As if there were not other women and more fascinating than you two!

*Bertha* But Abel loves you!

*Axel* That is possible I even believe that she suggested something of the kind Yes, she said so distinctly, let's see, how was it——

*Bertha* [*Changing*] You are really the most shameless creature I have ever met!

*Axel* Yes, I can well believe that

*Bertha* [*Puts on her hat and wrap*] Now you expect to put me out on the street? That is final?

*Axel* On the street, or where you please

*Bertha* [*Angry*] Do you think a woman will allow herself to be treated like this?

*Axel* Once you asked me to forget that you were a woman. Very well, I have forgotten it

*Bertha* But do you know that you have liabilities to the one who has been your wife?

*Axel* You mean the pay for good comradeship? What? A life annuity!

*Bertha* Yes

*Axel* [*Putting a few bills on the table*] Here is a month in advance

*Bertha* [*Takes money and counts it*] You still have a little honor left!

*Abel* Good-bye, *Bertha*. Now I am off

*Bertha* Wait and you can go along with me

*Abel* No, I won't go any further with you

*Bertha* What? Why not?

*Abel* I am ashamed to

*Bertha* [*Astonished*] Ashamed?

*Abel* Yes, ashamed. Good-bye [*Goes out*]

*Bertha* I don't understand. Good-bye, *Axel*! Thanks for the money. Are we friends? [*Taking his hand*]

*Axel* I am not, at least—Let go of my hand, or I will believe that you wish to seduce me again

[*BERTHA goes toward door*]

*Axel* [*With a sigh of relief*] Pleasant comrades! Oh!

[*The MAID enters from the orchard*]

*Maid* [*To AXEL*] There is a lady waiting for you

*Axel* I'll soon be free

*Bertha* Is that the new comrade?

*Axel* No, not comrade, but sweetheart

*Bertha* And your wife to be?

*Axel* Perhaps. Because I want to meet my comrades at the café, but at home I want a wife [*Starts as if to go*] Pardon me!

*Bertha* Farewell, then! Are we never to meet again?

*Axel* Yes, of course! But at the café. Good-bye!

THE END





PELLÉAS AND MÉLISANDE

BY MAURICE MAETERLINCK

*Translated from the French by RICHARD HOVEY*

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## MAURICE MAETERLINCK AND HIS PLAYS

MAURICE MAETERLINCK, scientist, philosophic mystic, poet, and dramatist, the author of *Pelléas and Mélisande*, was born in Ghent, Belgium, in 1862. After practicing law for a time, he lived in Paris, where he became a leader in the symbolist movement in poetry, returned to Belgium in 1888, and returned to France in 1896, which he has ever since made his home. Between 1889 and 1896 he wrote the plays of his so-called "early period" that have been his most distinctive and influential contribution to the drama. These were followed by various works of philosophy and science. His reputation is based as much upon these as upon his poems and his plays.

Maeterlinck's early plays, though written in French, are not in the tradition of French drama. They are not French in feeling, in the first place, and, again, their material, their technique, and their style spring from sources other than French. The symbolism of later French poetry never reached the French stage, and Maeterlinck, a leader in the symbolist movement in poetry, is the only dramatist writing in French who has applied this method to the drama. Between the earlier and the later plays of Maeterlinck there is in every respect a striking difference. His early plays were written actually to be performed by marionettes, since he held that the personality of the human actor was not a sufficiently clear medium for the transmission of the dramatist's ideas.

Furthermore, he maintained that mere action was not essential to drama, and was even a detriment, as he states in a famous passage in his *Treasure of the Humble*: "I have grown to believe that an old man, seated in his armchair, waiting patiently, with his lamp beside him, giving unconscious ear to all the eternal laws that reign about his house, interpreting, without comprehending, the silence of doors and windows and the quivering voice of the light, submitting with bent head to the presence of his soul and his destiny. . . I have grown to believe that he, motionless as he is, does yet live in reality a deeper, more human, and more universal life than the lover who strangles his mistress, the captain who conquers in battle, or the husband who avenges his honor."

But the plays written under this theory are less static than might be expected. They have little external action, it is true, and that little moves almost imperceptibly; but a mighty stream of feeling flows beneath the surface and breaks out at last in a rush that carries the action over the precipice. Throughout such early plays as *The Blind*, *The Intruder*, *Home*, and *The Death of Tintagiles*, Maeterlinck is dramatizing the subconscious, his characters are willless creatures of destiny, moving blindly toward a fore-ordained doom. Their speech is musical, and like music, is suggestive of many moods, for Maeterlinck, as does D'Annunzio, utilizes the resources of other arts, thus widening the scope of dramatic technique. His "atmosphere" is established partly by this word-music, partly by his unworldly settings. And through all runs the insistent, suggestive symbolism of both setting and action, in which overtones and implications say more than direct speech, the symbol more than the fact.

Maeterlinck's later plays belong, principally, to another order, in which he entirely reverses his theory of the drama. In his *Double Garden*, he says, "Do what one will, discover what marvels one may, the sovereign law of the stage, its essential demand, will always be *action*." But it is the Maeterlinck of the early plays who has exercised so potent an influence upon European drama and has affected dramatists so diverse as Hauptmann, D'Annunzio, Andrejev, and Claudel. As for content, the enigma of human fate, the sway of destiny, the power of the subconscious, the intense but almost hidden inner conflict, as for method, the slow, psychological action, the musical, hesitant, repetitious speech, the pictorially lovely and dream-like settings, and, always, the suggestive power of symbolism.

*Pelléas and Mélisande* is distinctly a transitional play from the earlier to the later method, combining some of the best qualities of each. It was produced first in Paris, in 1893. In London in 1895 it was produced in French by Lugné-Poe and his company, under the auspices of The Independent Theatre. The first production in English in London was made in 1898 by Mrs. Patrick Campbell, who also made the first production in America, in New York, in 1902. In 1923 the play was revived in New York with Jane Cowl as Mélisande.

## CHARACTERS

ARKEL, *King of Allemonde*

GENEVÈVE, *mother of Pelléas and Golaud*

PELLÉAS, }  
GOLAUD, } *grandsons of Arkel*

MÉLISANDE

LITTLE YNIOLD, *son of Golaud (by a former  
marriage)*

A PHYSICIAN

THE PORTER

*Servants, Beggars, etc*

*The action takes place in an imaginary kingdom suggestive of the  
Middle Ages*

# PELLEAS AND MELISANDE

## ACT ONE

SCENE ONE—*The gate of the castle*

*Maid-servants [within]* Open the gate! Open the gate!

*Porter [within]* Who is there? Why do you come and wake me up? Go out by the little gates, there are enough of them!

*A Maid-servant [within]* We have come to wash the threshold, the gate, and the steps, open them! open!

*Another Maid-servant [within]* There are going to be great happenings!

*Third Maid-servant [within]* There are going to be great fates! Open quickly!

*The Maid-servants* Open! open!

*Porter* Wait! wait! I do not know whether I shall be able to open it, . . . it is never opened. Wait till it is light.

*First Maid-servant* It is light enough without, I see the sunlight through the chink.

*Porter* Here are the great keys. Oh! oh! how the bolts and the locks grate! . . . Help me! help me!

*Maid-servants* We are pulling, we are pulling.

*Second Maid-servant* It will not open.

*First Maid-servant* Ah! ah! It is opening! it is opening slowly!

*Porter* How it shrieks! how it shrieks! It will wake up everybody.

*Second Maid-servant [appearing on the threshold]* Oh, how light it is already out-of-doors!

*First Maid-servant* The sun is rising on the seal.

*Porter* It is open. . . It is wide open!

[*All the maid-servants appear on the threshold and pass over it*]

*First Maid-servant* I am going to wash the sill first.

*Second Maid-servant* We shall never be able to clean all this.

*Other Maid-servants* Fetch the water! fetch the water!

*Porter* Yes, yes, pour on water, pour on water, pour on all the water of the Flood! You will never come to the end of it.

SCENE TWO—*Interior. MELISANDE discovered at the head of a spring*

[*Enter GOLAUD*]

*Golaud* I shall never be able to get out of this forest again—God knows where that bewitched me. And yet I thought I had wounded him to death, and here are traces of blood. But now, I have lost sight of him, I believe I am lost myself—my dog can no longer find me—I shall retrace my steps.

I hear weeping. Oh! oh! what is there yonder by the water's edge? A little girl weeping by the water's edge? [*He coughs*] She does not hear me. I cannot see her face. [*He approaches and touches MELISANDE on the shoulder*] Why weepst thou? [*MELISANDE tries to escape, starts up, and would flee*] Do not be afraid. You have nothing to fear. Why are you weeping here all alone?

*Melisande* Do not touch me! do not touch me!

*Golaud* Do not be afraid. . . I will not do you any harm. Oh, you are beautiful!

*Melisande* Do not touch me! do not touch me! or I throw myself in the water!

*Golaud* I will not touch you. . . See, I will stay here, against the tree. Do not be afraid. Has any one hurt you?

*Melisande* Oh! yes! yes! yes! . . . [*She robs profoundly*]

*Golaud* Who has hurt you?

*Melisande* I, every one! every one!

*Golaud* What hurt have they done you?

*Melisande* I will not tell! I cannot tell!

*Golaud* Come, do not weep so. Whence come you?

*Melisande* I have fled! . . . fled . . . fled.

*Golaud* Yes, but whence have you fled?

*Melisande* I am lost! lost! Oh! oh! lost here. I am not of this place. I was not born here.

*Golaud* Whence are you? Where were you born?

*Melisande* Oh! oh! far away from here! . . . far away . . . far away.

the way to knock at doors It is as if a misfortune had arrived, look, you have frightened little mother

*Ynold* I only knocked a tiny little bit

*Pelléas* It is late, little father will not come back to-night, it is time for you to go to bed

*Ynold* I shall not go to bed before you do

*Pelléas* What? . . . What is that you are saying?

*Ynold* I say . . . not before you not before you

[*Bursts into sobs and takes refuge by MÉLISANDE*]

*Mélsande* What is it, Ynold? . . . What is it? why do you weep all at once?

*Ynold* [*sobbing*] Because . . . oh! oh! because

*Mélsande* Because what? . . . Because what? Tell me

*Ynold* Little mother . . . little mother you are going away. . .

*Mélsande* But what has taken hold of you, Ynold? . . . I have never dreamed of going away . . .

*Ynold* Yes, you have, yes, you have; little father has gone away Little father does not come back, and you are going to go away too . . . I have seen it . . . I have seen it . . .

*Mélsande* But there has never been any idea of that, Ynold Why, what makes you think that I would go away? . . .

*Ynold* I have seen it . . . I have seen it You have said things to uncle that I could not hear

*Pelléas* He is sleepy . . . He has been dreaming Come here, Ynold, asleep already? . . . Come and look out at the window, the swans are fighting with the dogs

*Ynold* [*at the window*] Oh! oh! they are chasing the dogs! They are chasing them! . . . Oh! oh! the water! the wings! . . . the wings! they are afraid

*Pelléas* [*coming back by MÉLISANDE*] He is sleepy, he is struggling against sleep, his eyes were closing

*Mélsande* [*singing softly as she spins*]

Saint Daniel and Saint Michaël

Saint Michaël and Saint Raphaël

*Ynold* [*at the window*] Oh! oh! little mother!

*Mélsande* [*rising abruptly*] What is it, Ynold? . . . What is it? . . .

*Ynold* I saw something at the window!

[*PELLÉAS and MÉLISANDE run to the window*]

*Pelléas* What is there at the window?

. . . What have you seen?

*Ynold* Oh! oh! I saw something! . . .

*Pelléas* But there is nothing I see nothing . . .

*Mélsande* Nor I . . .

*Pelléas* Where did you see something? Which way? . . .

*Ynold* Down there, down there! . . . It is no longer there . . .

*Pelléas* He does not know what he is saying He must have seen the light of the moon on the forest There are often strange reflections or else something must have passed on the highway or in his sleep For see, see, I believe he is quite asleep

*Ynold* [*at the window*] Little father is there! little father is there!

*Pelléas* [*going to the window*] He is right; Golaud is coming into the courtyard

*Ynold* Little father! little father!

I am going to meet him! . . . [*Exit, running—A silence*]

*Pelléas* They are coming up the stair

[*Enter GOLAUD and little YNOLD with a lamp*]

*Golaud* You are still waiting in the dark?

*Ynold* I have brought a light, little mother, a big light! . . . [*He lifts the lamp and looks at MÉLISANDE*] You have been weeping, little mother? You have been weeping? [*He lifts the lamp toward PELLÉAS and looks in turn at him*] You too, you too, you have been weeping? . . . Little father, look, little father, they have both been weeping

*Golaud* Do not hold the light under their eyes so . . .

SCENE TWO—One of the towers of the castle  
A watchman's round passes under a window in the tower

*Mélsande* [*at the window, combing her unbound hair*].

My long locks fall foaming

To the threshold of the tower,—

My locks await your coming

All along the tower,

And all the long, long hour,

And all the long, long hour.

Saint Daniel and Saint Michaël,

Saint Michaël and Saint Raphaël.

I was born on a Sunday,  
A Sunday at high noon . . .

[Enter PELLÉAS by the watchman's round.]

Pelléas Holà! Holà! ho! . . .

Mélsande Who is there?

Pelléas I, I, and I! . . . What art thou doing there at the window, singing like a bird that is not native here?

Mélsande I am doing my hair for the night . . .

Pelléas Is it that I see upon the wall?

I thought you had some light

Mélsande I have opened the window; it is too hot in the tower . . . It is beautiful to-night

Pelléas There are innumerable stars, I have never seen so many as to-night, but the moon is still upon the sea Do not stay in the shadow, Mélsande, lean forward a little till I see your unbound hair . . .

Mélsande I am frightful so . . . [She leans out at the window]

Pelléas Oh! oh! Mélsandel oh, thou art beautiful! thou art beautiful so! Lean out! lean out! Let me come nearer thee . . .

Mélsande I cannot come nearer thee

I am leaning out as far as I can . . .

Pelléas I cannot come up higher, give me at least thy hand to-night . . . before I go away I leave to-morrow . . .

Mélsande No, no, no!

Pelléas Yes, yes, yes, I leave, I shall leave to-morrow Give me thy hand, thy hand, thy little hand upon my lips

Mélsande I give thee not my hand if thou wilt leave . . .

Pelléas Give, give, give! . . .

Mélsande Thou wilt not leave?

Pelléas I will wait, I will wait . . .

Mélsande I see a rose in the shadows

Pelléas Where? I see only the boughs of the willow hanging over the wall

Mélsande Farther down, farther down, in the garden, farther down, in the somber green

Pelléas It is not a rose I will go see by and by, but give me thy hand first, first thy hand.

Mélsande There, there, . . . I cannot lean out farther

Pelléas I cannot reach thy hand with my lips.

Mélsande. I cannot lean out farther

. . . I am on the point of falling . . . —Oh! oh! my hair is falling down the tower! [Her tresses fall suddenly over her head, as she is leaning out so, and stream over PELLÉAS]

Pelléas Oh! oh! what is it? Thy hair, thy hair is falling down to me! All thy locks, Mélsande, all thy locks have fallen down the tower! I hold them in my hands, I hold them in my mouth I hold them in my arms, I put them about my neck . . . I will not open my hands again to-night . . .

Mélsande Let me go! let me go! . . . Thou wilt make me fall! . . .

Pelléas No, no, no, I have never seen such hair as thine, Mélsandel . . . See, see, see, it comes from so high and yet it floods me to the heart! And yet it floods me to the knees! And it is sweet, sweet as if it fell from heaven! I see the sky no longer through thy locks Thou seest, thou seest? . . . I can no longer hold them with both hands, there are some on the boughs of the willow . . . They are alive like birds in my hands, and they love me, they love me more than thou! . . .

Mélsande Let me go, let me go! . . . Some one might come

Pelléas No, no, no, I shall not set thee free to-night Thou art my prisoner to-night, all night, all night! . . .

Mélsande Pelléas! Pelléas! . . .

Pelléas I tie them, I tie them to the willow boughs Thou shalt not go away now, thou shalt not go away now Look, look, I am kissing thy hair . . . I suffer no more in the midst of thy hair . . . Hearest thou my kisses along thy hair? They mount along thy hair Each hair must bring thee some Thou seest, thou seest, I can open my hands My hands are free, and thou canst not leave me now . . .

Mélsande Oh! oh! thou hurtest me . . . [Doves come out of the tower and fly about them in the night]—What is that, Pelléas?—What is it flying about me?

Pelléas It is the doves coming out of the tower I have frightened them, they are flying away

Mélsande It is my doves, Pelléas—Let us go away, let me go, they will not come back again

Pelléas Why will they not come back again?



*Mélsande* They will be lost in the dark . . . Let me go, let me lift my head I hear a noise of footsteps . . . Let me go!—It is Golaud! . . . I believe it is Golaud! He has heard us

*Pelléas* Wait! Wait! . . . Thy hair is about the boughs It is caught there in the darkness . . . Wait, wait! It is dark

[*Enter GOLAUD, by the watchman's round*]

*Golaud* What do you here?

*Pelléas* What do I here? . . . I . . .

*Golaud* You are children . . . *Mélsande*, do not lean out so at the window, you will fall Do you not know it is late? It is nearly midnight—Do not play so in the darkness—You are children . . . [*Laughing nervously*] What children! . . . What children! . . . [*Exit, with PELLÉAS*]

### SCENE THREE—*The vaults of the castle*

[*Enter GOLAUD and PELLÉAS*]

*Golaud* Take care, this way, this way—You have never penetrated into these vaults?

*Pelléas* Yes, once, of old, but it was long ago . . .

*Golaud* They are prodigious great, it is a succession of enormous crypts that end, God knows where The whole castle is builded on these crypts Do you smell the deathly odor that reigns here?—That is what I wished to show you In my opinion, it comes from the little underground lake I am going to have you see Take care, walk before me, in the light of my lantern I will warn you when we are there [*They continue to walk in silence*] Hey! hey! *Pelléas*! stop! stop! [*He seizes him by the arm*] For God's sake! Do you not see?—One step more, and you had been in the gulf! . . .

*Pelléas* But I did not see it! . . . The lantern no longer lighted me . . .

*Golaud* I made a misstep . . . but if I had not held you by the arm Well, this is the stagnant water that I spoke of to you Do you perceive the smell of death that rises?—Let us go to the end of this overhanging rock, and do you lean over a little It will strike you in the face

*Pelléas* I smell it already, . . . you would say a smell of the tomb

*Golaud* Farther, farther . . . It is this that on certain days has poisoned the castle The King will not believe it comes from here.—The crypt should be walled up in

which this standing water is found It is time, besides, to examine these vaults a little Have you noticed those lizards on the walls and pillars of the vaults?—There is a labor hidden here you would not suspect, and the whole castle will be swallowed up one of these nights, if it is not looked out for But what will you have? Nobody likes to come down this far . . . There are strange lizards in many of the walls Oh! here do you perceive the smell of death that rises?

*Pelléas* Yes, there is a smell of death rising about us . . .

*Golaud* Lean over, have no fear. . . . I will hold you give me . . . no, no, not your hand it might slip your arm, your arm! Do you see the gulf? [*Moved*]—*Pelléas*? *Pelléas*?

*Pelléas* Yes, I think I see the bottom of the gulf . . . Is it the light that trembles so? You [*He straightens up, turns, and looks at GOLAUD*]

*Golaud* [*with a trembling voice*] Yes; it is the lantern See, I shook it to lighten the walls . . .

*Pelléas* I stifle here, let us go out. . .

*Golaud* Yes, let us go out . . . [*Exeunt in silence*]

### SCENE FOUR—*A terrace at the exit of the vaults*

[*Enter GOLAUD and PELLÉAS*]

*Pelléas* Ah! I breathe at last! . . . I thought, one moment, I was going to be ill in those enormous crypts, I was on the point of falling There is a damp air there, heavy as a leaden dew, and darkness thick as a poisoned paste And now, all the air of all the sea! There is a fresh wind, see, fresh as a leaf that has just opened, over the little green waves Hold! the flowers have just been watered at the foot of the terrace, and the smell of the verdure and the wet roses comes up to us It must be nearly noon, they are already in the shadow of the tower It is noon, I hear the bells ringing, and the children are going down to the beach to bathe I did not know that we had stayed so long in the caverns . . .

*Golaud* We went down toward eleven o'clock

*Pelléas* Earlier, it must have been earlier, I heard it strike half past ten.

*Golaud* Half past ten or a quarter to eleven . . .

*Pelléas* They have opened all the windows of the castle It will be unusually hot this afternoon Look, there is mother with Mélisande at a window of the tower

*Golaud* Yes, they have taken refuge on the shady side—Speaking of Mélisande, I heard what passed and what was said last night I am quite aware all that is but child's play, but it need not be repeated Mélisande is very young and very impressionable, and she must be treated the more circumspectly that she is perhaps with child at this moment

She is very delicate, hardly woman, and the least emotion might bring on a mishap It is not the first time I have noticed there might be something between you You are older than she, it will suffice to have told you.

Avoid her as much as possible, without affectation, moreover, without affectation

. —What is it I see yonder on the highway toward the forest?

*Pelléas* Some herds they are leading to the city

*Golaud* They cry like lost children, you would say they smelt the butcher already—It will be time for dinner—What a fine day! What a capital day for the harvest!

[*Exeunt*]

SCENE FIVE—Before the castle

[*Enter GOLAUD and little YNOLD*]

*Golaud* Come, we are going to sit down here, Ynold, sit on my knee, we shall see from here what passes in the forest I do not see you any more at all now You abandon me too, you are always at little mother's

Why, we are sitting just under little mother's windows—Perhaps she is saying her evening prayer at this moment But tell me, Ynold, she is often with your uncle Pelléas, isn't she?

*Ynold* Yes, yes, always, little father, when you are not there, little father

*Golaud* Ah!—Look, some one is going by with a lantern in the garden—But I have been told they did not like each other It seems they often quarrel, no? Is it true?

*Ynold* Yes, yes, it is true

*Golaud* Yes?—Ah! ah!—But what do they quarrel about?

*Ynold* About the door

*Golaud* What?—about the door?—What

are you talking about?—No, come, explain yourself, why do they quarrel about the door?

*Ynold* Because it won't stay open

*Golaud* Who wants it to stay open?—Come, why do they quarrel?

*Ynold* I don't know, little father, about the light

*Golaud* I am not talking to you about the light, we will talk of that by and by I am talking to you about the door Answer what I ask you, you must learn to talk, it is time Do not put your hand in your mouth so, come

*Ynold* Little father! little father! . . I won't do it any more [*He cries*]

*Golaud* Come, what are you crying for now? What has happened?

*Ynold* Oh! oh! little father, you hurt me

*Golaud* I hurt you?—Where did I hurt you? I did not mean to

*Ynold* Here, here, on my little arm

*Golaud* I did not mean to, come, don't cry any more, and I will give you something to-morrow

*Ynold* What, little father?

*Golaud* A quiver and some arrows, but tell me what you know about the door.

*Ynold* Big arrows?

*Golaud* Yes, yes, very big arrows—But why don't they want the door to be open?—Come, answer me sometime!—No, no, do not open your mouth to cry I am not angry We are going to have a quiet talk, like Pelléas and little mother when they are together What do they talk about when they are together?

*Ynold* Pelléas and little mother?

*Golaud* Yes, what do they talk about?

*Ynold* About me, always about me

*Golaud* And what do they say about you?

*Ynold* They say I am going to be very big

*Golaud* Oh, plague of my life! I am here like a blind man searching for his treasure at the bottom of the ocean! I am here like a new-born child lost in the forest, and you Come, come, Ynold, I was wandering, we are going to talk seriously Do Pelléas and little mother never speak of me when I am not there?

*Ynold* Yes, yes, little father, they are always speaking of you

*Golaud* Ah! And what do they say of me?

*Ynold* They say I shall grow as big as you are

*Golaud.* You are always by them?

*Ynold* Yes, yes, always, always, little father

*Golaud* They never tell you to go play somewhere else?

*Ynold* No, little father, they are afraid when I am not there

*Golaud* They are afraid? . What makes you think they are afraid?

*Ynold* Little mother always says, "Don't go away, don't go away!" . . They are unhappy, but they laugh . .

*Golaud* But that does not prove they are afraid

*Ynold* Yes, yes, little father; she is afraid . . .

*Golaud* Why do you say she is afraid?

*Ynold* They always weep in the dark.

*Golaud* Ah! ah! . .

*Ynold* That makes one weep too.

*Golaud* Yes, yes! .

*Ynold* She is pale, little father

*Golaud* Ah! ah! . patience, my God, patience! . .

*Ynold* What, little father?

*Golaud* Nothing, nothing, my child—I saw a wolf go by in the forest—Then they get on well together?—I am glad to learn they are on good terms—They kiss each other sometimes?—No? .

*Ynold* Kiss each other, little father?—No, no,—ah! yes, little father, yes, yes, once once when it rained

*Golaud* They kissed?—But how, how did they kiss?

*Ynold* So, little father, so! . [*He gives him a kiss on the mouth, laughing*] Ah! ah! your beard, little father! It pricks! it pricks! it pricks! It is getting all gray, little father, and your hair, too, all gray, all gray [*The window under which they are sitting is lighted up at this moment, and the light falls upon them*] Ah! ah! little mother has lit her lamp It is light, little father, it is light

*Golaud* Yes, it is beginning to be light

*Ynold* Let us go there, too, little father; let us go there, too

*Golaud* Where do you want to go?

*Ynold* Where it is light, little father

*Golaud* No, no, my child, let us stay in the dark a little longer One cannot tell, one cannot tell yet Do you see those

poor people down there trying to kindle a little fire in the forest?—It has rained And over there, do you see the old gardener trying to lift that tree the wind has blown down across the road?—He cannot, the tree is too big, the tree is too heavy, and it will lie where it fell All that cannot be helped . I think Pelléas is mad

*Ynold* No, little father, he is not mad, he is very good

*Golaud* Do you want to see little mother?

*Ynold* Yes, yes, I want to see her!

*Golaud* Don't make any noise, I am going to hoist you up to the window It is too high for me, for all I am so big [*He lifts the child*] Do not make the least noise, little mother would be terribly afraid . . Do you see her?—Is she in the room?

*Ynold* Yes Oh, how light it is!

*Golaud* She is alone?

*Ynold* Yes, no, no Uncle Pelléas is there, too

*Golaud* He— !

*Ynold* Ah! ah! little father! you have hurt me! . . .

*Golaud* It is nothing, be still, I will not do it any more, look, look, Ynold! I stumbled, speak lower What are they doing?—

*Ynold* They are not doing anything, little father, they are waiting for something.

*Golaud* Are they near each other?

*Ynold* No, little father

*Golaud* And and the bed? Are they near the bed?

*Ynold* The bed, little father?—I can't see the bed

*Golaud* Lower, lower, they will hear you Are they speaking?

*Ynold* No, little father, they do not speak

*Golaud* But what are they doing?—They must be doing something .

*Ynold* They are looking at the light.

*Golaud* Both?

*Ynold* Yes, little father

*Golaud* They do not say anything?

*Ynold* No, little father, they do not close their eyes

*Golaud* They do not come near each other?

*Ynold* No, little father, they do not stir

*Golaud* They are sitting down?

*Ynold* No, little father, they are standing upright against the wall

*Golaud* They make no gestures?—They

do not look at each other?—They make no signs?

*Ynold.* No, little father—Oh! oh! little father, they never close their eyes I am terribly afraid

*Golaud.* Be still They do not stir yet?

*Ynold.* No, little father—I am afraid, little father, let me come down!

*Golaud.* Why, what are you afraid of?—Look! look!

*Ynold.* I dare not look any more, little father! Let me come down!

*Golaud.* Look! look!

*Ynold.* Oh! oh! I am going to cry, little father!—Let me come down! let me come down!

*Golaud.* Come, we will go see what has happened. [*Excunt*]

#### ACT FOUR

##### SCENE ONE—A corridor in the castle

[*Enter PELLÉAS and MÉLISANDE, meeting*]

*Pelléas.* Where goest thou? I must speak to thee to-night Shall I see thee?

*Mélisande.* Yes

*Pelléas.* I have just left my father's room He is getting better The physician has told us he is saved And yet this morning I had a presentiment this day would end ill I have had a rumor of misfortune in my ears for some time Then, all at once there was a great change, to-day it is no longer anything but a question of time All the windows in his room have been thrown open He speaks, he seems happy He does not speak yet like an ordinary man, but already his ideas no longer all come from the other world He recognized me He took my hand and said with that strange air he has had since he fell sick "Is it thou, Pélleas? Why, why, I had not noticed it before, but thou hast the grave and friendly look of those who will not live long You must travel, you must travel " It is strange, I shall obey him. My mother listened to him and wept for joy—Hast thou not been aware of it?—The whole house seems already to revive, you hear breathing, you hear speaking, you hear walking Listen, I hear some one speaking behind that door Quick, quick! answer quickly! where shall I see thee?

*Mélisande.* Where wouldst thou?

*Pelléas.* In the park, near "Blind Man's Spring"—Wilt thou?—Wilt thou come?

*Mélisande.* Yes

*Pelléas.* It will be the last night,—I am going to travel, as my father said Thou wilt not see me more

*Mélisande.* Do not say that, Pélleas . . I shall see thee always, I shall look upon thee always

*Pelléas.* Thou wilt look in vain . I shall be so far away thou couldst no longer see me I shall try to go very far away.

I am full of joy, and you would say I had all the weight of heaven and earth on my body to-day

*Mélisande.* What has happened, Pélleas?—I no longer understand what you say

*Pelléas.* Go, go, let us separate I hear some one speaking behind that door It is the strangers who came to the castle this morning They are going out Let us go, it is the strangers

[*Excunt severally*]

##### SCENE TWO—An apartment in the castle ARHËL and MÉLISANDE discovered

*Arhël.* Now that Pélleas's father is saved, and sickness, the old handmaid of Death, has left the castle, a little joy and a little sunlight will at last come into the house again It was time!—For, since thy coming, we have only lived here whispering about a closed room And truly I have pitied thee, Mélisande Thou earnest here all joyous, like a child seeking a gala-day, and at the moment thou enteredst in the vestibule I saw thy face change, and probably thy soul, as the face changes in spite of us when we enter at noon into a grotto too gloomy and too cold And since,—since, on account of all that, I have often no longer understood thee I observed thee, thou wert there, listless, perhaps, but with the strange, astray look of one awaiting ever a great trouble, in the sunlight, in a beautiful garden I cannot explain . . But I was sad to see thee so, for thou art too young and too beautiful to live already day and night under the breath of death

But now all that will change At my age, —and there, perhaps, is the surest fruit of my life,—at my age I have gained I know not what faith in the fidelity of events, and I have always seen that every young and beautiful being creates about itself young, beautiful,

and happy events And it is thou who wilt now open the door for the new era I have glimpses of . . . Come here, why dost thou stay there without answering and without lifting thine eyes?—I have kissed thee but once only hitherto—the day of thy coming, and yet old men need sometimes to touch with their lips a woman's forehead or a child's cheek, to believe still in the freshness of life and avert awhile the menaces Art thou afraid of my old lips? How I have pined thee these months!

*Mélsande* Grandfather, I have not been unhappy

*Arkël* Perhaps you were of those who are unhappy without knowing it, . . . and they are the most unhappy Let me look at thee, so, quite near, a moment, we have such need of beauty beside Death .

[*Enter GOLAUD*]

*Golaud* Pelléas leaves to-night

*Arkël* Thou hast blood on thy forehead — What hast thou done?

*Golaud* Nothing, nothing . . . I have passed through a hedge of thorns

*Mélsande* Bend down your head a little, my lord I will wipe your forehead

*Golaud* [*repulsing her*] I will not that you touch me, do you understand? Go, go!—I am not speaking to you—Where is my sword?—I came to seek my sword .

*Mélsande* Here, on the praying-stool.

*Golaud* Bring it [*To ARKËL*] They have just found another peasant dead of hunger, along by the sea You would say they all meant to die under our eyes [*To MÉLISANDE*] Well, my sword?—Why do you tremble so?—I am not going to kill you I would simply examine the blade I do not employ the sword for these uses Why do you examine me like a beggar?—I do not come to ask alms of you. You hope to see something in my eyes without my seeing anything in yours?—Do you think I may know something? [*To ARKËL*]—Do you see those great eyes?—It is as if they were proud of their richness .

*Arkël* I see there only a great innocence .

*Golaud* A great innocence! They are greater than innocence . . . They are purer than the eyes of a lamb They would give God lessons in innocence! A great innocence! Listen I am so near them I feel the freshness of their lashes when they wink, and yet I am less far away from the great secrets

of the other world than from the smallest secret of those eyes! . . . A great innocence!

More than innocence! You would say the angels of heaven celebrated there an eternal baptism! I know those eyes! I have seen them at their work! Close them! close them! or I shall close them for a long while!

Do not put your right hand to your throat so, I am saying a very simple thing I have no under-thought If I had an under-thought, why should I not say it? Ah! ah!—Do not attempt to flee!—Here!—Give me that hand!—Ah! your hands are too hot.

Go away! Your flesh disgusts me! . . . Here!—There is no more question of fleeing now! [*He seizes her by the hair*] You shall follow me on your knees!—On your knees!—On your knees before me!—Ah! ah! your long hair serves some purpose at last! .

Right, left!—Left, right!—Absalom! Absalom—Forward! back! To the ground! to the ground! . . . You see, you see, I laugh already like an old man .

*Arkël* [*running up*] *Golaud*! . . .

*Golaud* [*affecting a sudden calm*] You will do as you may please, look you—I attach no importance to that—I am too old, and, besides, I am not a spy I shall await chance, and then Oh! then! simply because it is the custom, simply because it is the custom [*Exit*]

*Arkël* What ails him?—He is drunk?

*Mélsande* [*in tears*] No, no, he does not love me any more . . . I am not happy!

I am not happy!

*Arkël* If I were God, I would have pity on men's hearts . . .

SCENE THREE—A terrace of the castle Little YNIOLD discovered, trying to lift a boulder

*Yniold* Oh, this stone is heavy! . . . It is heavier than I am It is heavier than everybody It is heavier than everything that ever happened I can see my golden ball between the rock and this naughty stone, and I cannot reach it My little arm is not long enough, and this stone won't be lifted I can't lift it, and nobody could lift it It is heavier than the whole house, you would think it had roots in the earth [*The bleatings of a flock heard far away*]—Oh! oh! I hear the sheep crying

[*He goes to look, at the edge of the terrace*] Why! there is no more sun They are coming the little sheep they are com-

ing There is a lot of them! There is a lot of them! They are afraid of the dark They crowd together! They crowd together! They can hardly walk any more They are crying! They are crying! And they go quick! They go quick!

They are already at the great crossroads Ah! ah! They don't know where they ought to go any more . They don't cry any more They wait . Some of them want to go to the right They all want to go to the right They cannot! . The shepherd is throwing earth at them Ah! ah! They are going to pass by here They obey! They obey! They are going to pass under the terrace. They are going to pass under the rocks I am going to see them near by Oh! oh! what a lot of them! What a lot of them! The whole road is full of them!

They all keep still now Shepherd! shepherd! why don't they speak any more?

*The Shepherd [who is out of sight]* Because it is no longer the road to the stable

*Ynold* Where are they going?—Shepherd! shepherd!—Where are they going?—He doesn't hear me any more They are too far away already They go quick They are not making a noise any more It is no longer the road to the stable Where are they going to sleep to-night?—Oh! oh!—It is too dark I am going to tell something to somebody *[Exit]*

SCENE FOUR—*A fountain in the park*

*[Enter PELLÉAS]*

*Pelléas* It is the last evening the last evening It must all end I have played like a child about a thing I did not guess I have played a-dream about the snares of fate Who has awakened me all at once? I shall flee, crying out for joy and woe like a blind man fleeing from his burning house.

I am going to tell her I shall flee My father is out of danger, and I have no more reason to lie to myself It is late, she does not come I should do better to go away without seeing her again I must look well at her this time There are some things that I no longer recall It seems at times as if I had not seen her for a hundred years And I have not yet looked upon her look. There remains nought to me if I go away thus And all those memories it is as if I were to take away a little water in

a muslin bag . . I must see her one last time, to the bottom of her heart I must tell her all that I have never told her

*[Enter MÉLISANDE]*

*Mélsande* Pelléas!

*Pelléas* Mélsandel!—Is it thou, Mélsande?

*Mélsande* Yes

*Pelléas* Come hither, do not stay at the edge of the moonlight—Come hither We have so many things to tell each other . . Come hither in the shadow of the linden

*Mélsande* Let me stay in the light .

*Pelléas* We might be seen from the windows of the tower Come hither, here, we have nothing to fear—Take care, we might be seen

*Mélsande* I wish to be seen

*Pelléas* Why, what doth ail thee?—Thou wert able to come out without being seen?

*Mélsande* Yes, your brother slept

*Pelléas* It is late—In an hour they will close the gates We must be careful Why art thou come so late?

*Mélsande* Your brother had a bad dream And then my gown was caught on the nails of the gate See, it is torn I lost all this time, and ran

*Pelléas* My poor Mélsandel I should almost be afraid to touch thee Thou art still out of breath, like a hunted bird . It is for me, for me, thou doest all that? . I hear thy heart beat as if it were mine

Come hither nearer, nearer me

*Mélsande* Why do you laugh?

*Pelléas* I do not laugh,—or else I laugh for joy, unwittingly . It were a weeping matter, rather

*Mélsande* We have come here before I recollect

*Pelléas* Yes yes . . Long months ago—I knew not then Knowest thou why I asked thee to come here to-night?

*Mélsande* No

*Pelléas* It is perhaps the last time I shall see thee I must go away forever

*Mélsande* Why sayest thou always thou wilt go away?

*Pelléas* I must tell thee what thou knowest already?—Thou knowest not what I am going to tell thee?

*Mélsande* Why, no, why, no, I know nothing—

*Pelléas* Thou knowest not why I must go afar Thou knowest not it is because . . . *[He kisses her abruptly]* I love thee

*Mélsande* [*in a low voice*] I love thee, too

*Pelléas*. Oh! oh! What saidst thou, *Mélsande*? . . . I hardly heard it! Thou sayest that in a voice coming from the end of the world! . . . I hardly heard thee . . . Thou lovest me?—Thou lovest me, too? . . . Since when lovest thou me?

*Mélsande* Since always . . . Since I saw thee

*Pelléas* Oh, how thou sayest that! . . . Thy voice seems to have blown across the sea in spring! . . . I have never heard it until now, . . . one would say it had rained on my heart! Thou sayest that so frankly! Like an angel questioned! I cannot believe it, *Mélsande*! . . . Why shouldst thou love me?—Nay, why dost thou love me?—Is what thou sayest true?—Thou dost not mock me?—Thou dost not lie a little, to make me smile?

*Mélsande* No; I never lie, I lie but to thy brother . . .

*Pelléas* Oh, how thou sayest that! . . . Thy voice! thy voice! It is cooler and more frank than the water is! It is like pure water on my lips! It is like pure water on my hands . . . Give me, give me thy hands! . . . Oh, how small thy hands are! I did not know thou wert so beautiful! I have never seen anything so beautiful before thee . . . I was full of unrest, I sought throughout the house . . . I sought throughout the country . . . And I found not beauty . . . And now I have found thee! . . . I have found thee! I do not think there could be on the earth a fairer woman! Where art thou?—I no longer hear thee breathe . . .

*Mélsande* Because I look on thee . . .

*Pelléas* Why dost thou look so gravely on me?—We are already in the shadow—It is too dark under this tree—Come into the light . . . We cannot see how happy we are . . . Come, come, so little time remains to us

*Mélsande* No, no; let us stay here . . . I am nearer thee in the dark

*Pelléas* Where are thine eyes?—Thou art not going to fly me?—Thou dost not think of me just now

*Mélsande* Oh, yes; oh, yes; I only think of thee

*Pelléas* Thou wert looking elsewhere . . .

*Mélsande* I saw thee elsewhere . . .

*Pelléas* Thy soul is far away . . . What

ails thee, then?—Meseems thou art not happy

*Mélsande* Yes, yes; I am happy, but I am sad . . .

*Pelléas* One is sad often when one loves . . .

*Mélsande*. I weep always when I think of thee . . .

*Pelléas* I, too . . . I, too, *Mélsande* . . . I am quite near thee, I weep for joy, and yet . . . [*He kisses her again*]—Thou art strange when I kiss thee so . . . Thou art so beautiful that one would think thou wert about to die

*Mélsande* Thou, too . . .

*Pelléas* There, there . . . We do not what we will . . . I did not love thee the first time I saw thee . . .

*Mélsande* Nor I . . . nor I . . . I was afraid . . .

*Pelléas* I could not admit thine eyes . . . I would have gone away at once . . . and then . . .

*Mélsande* And I—I would not have come . . . I do not yet know why—I was afraid to come

*Pelléas* There are so many things one never knows . . . We are ever waiting, and then . . . What is that noise?—They are closing the gates! . . .

*Mélsande* Yes, they have closed the gates

*Pelléas* We cannot go back now!—Hearest thou the bolts?—Listen! Listen! . . . The great chains! . . . The great chains! . . . It is too late, it is too late!

*Mélsande* All the better! all the better! all the better!

*Pelléas* Thou— . . . ? Behold, behold! . . . It is no longer we who will it so! . . . All's lost, all's saved! All is saved to-night!—Come, come . . . My heart beats like a madman,—up to my very throat [*They embrace*] Listen! Listen! My heart is almost strangling me . . . Come! come! . . . Ah, how beautiful it is in the shadows! . . .

*Mélsande* There is some one behind us!

*Pelléas* I see no one . . .

*Mélsande* I heard a noise . . .

*Pelléas* I hear only thy heart in the dark

*Mélsande*. I heard the crackling of dead leaves

*Pelléas* Because the wind is silent all at once . . . It fell as we were kissing . . .



*Mélsande* How long our shadows are to-night!

*Pelléas* They embrace to the very end of the garden. Oh, how they kiss far away from us! Look! look!

*Mélsande* [*in a stifled voice*] A-a-h!—He is behind a tree!

*Pelléas* Who?

*Mélsande* Golaud!

*Pelléas* Golaud!—Where?—I see nothing

*Mélsande* There . . . at the end of our shadows . . .

*Pelléas* Yes, yes, I saw him. . . . Let us not turn abruptly . . .

*Mélsande* He has his sword. . . .

*Pelléas* I have not mine . . .

*Mélsande* He saw us kiss . . .

*Pelléas* He does not know we have seen him. Do not stir, do not turn your head

He would rush headlong on us He will remain there while he thinks we do not know He watches us He is still motionless Go, go at once this way I will wait for him I will stop him . . .

*Mélsande* No, no, no!

*Pelléas* Go! Go! He has seen all! He will kill us!

*Mélsande* All the better! all the better! all the better!

*Pelléas* He comes! He comes! . . . Thy mouth! . . . Thy mouth!

*Mélsande* Yes! yes! yes!

[*They kiss desperately*]

*Pelléas* Oh! oh! All the stars are falling!

*Mélsande* Upon me, too! upon me, too!

*Pelléas* Again! Again! Givel Givel!

*Mélsande* All! all! all!

[*GOLAUD rushes upon them, sword in hand, and strikes PELLÉAS, who falls at the brink of the fountain MÉLISANDE flees terrified*]

*MÉLISANDE* [*fleeing*] Oh! oh! I have no courage! I have no courage!

[*GOLAUD pursues her through the wood in silence*]

## ACT FIVE

SCENE ONE—A lower hall in the castle The women servants discovered, gathered together, while without children are playing before one of the ventilators of the hall

*An Old Servant* You will see, you will see, my daughters, it will be to-night—Some one will come to tell us by and by . . .

*Another Servant* They will not come to tell us They don't know what they are doing any longer . . .

*Thurd Servant* Let us wait here . . .

*Fourth Servant* We shall know well enough when we must go up

*Fifth Servant* When the time is come, we shall go up of ourselves . . .

*Sixth Servant* There is no longer a sound heard in the house . . .

*Seventh Servant* We ought to make the children keep still, who are playing before the ventilator

*Eighth Servant* They will be still of themselves by and by

*Ninth Servant* The time has not yet come [*Enter an old Servant*]

*The Old Servant* No one can go in the room any longer I have listened more than an hour . . . You could hear the flies walk on the doors I heard nothing

*First Servant* Has she been left alone in the room?

*The Old Servant* No, no, I think the room is full of people

*First Servant* They will come, they will come, by and by

*The Old Servant* Lord! Lord! It is not happiness that has come into the house One may not speak, but if I could say what I know

*Second Servant* It was you who found them before the gate?

*The Old Servant* Why, yes! why, yes! It was I who found them. The porter says it was he who saw them first, but it was I who waked them He was sleeping on his face and would not get up—And now he comes saying, "It was I who saw them first" Is that just?—See, I burned myself lighting a lamp to go down cellar—Now what was I going to do down cellar?—I can't remember any more what I was going to do down cellar—At any rate, I got up very early, it was not yet very light, I said to myself, I will go across the courtyard, and then I will open the gate Good, I go down the stairs on tip-toe, and I open the gate as if it were an ordinary gate My God! My God! What do I see? Divine a little what I see!

*First Servant* They were before the gate?

*The Old Servant* They were both stretched



out before the gate! Exactly like poor folk that are too hungry . . . They were huddled together like little children who are afraid. The little princess was nearly dead, and the great Golaud had still his sword in his side. . . . There was blood on the sill . . .

*Second Servant* We ought to make the children keep still . . . They are screaming with all their might before the ventilator

*Third Servant* You can't hear yourself speak . . .

*Fourth Servant* There is nothing to be done I have tried already, they won't keep still . . .

*First Servant* It seems he is nearly cured?

*The Old Servant* Who?

*First Servant* The great Golaud

*Third Servant* Yes, yes, they have taken him to his wife's room I met them just now, in the corridor They were holding him up as if he were drunk He cannot yet walk alone

*The Old Servant* He could not kill himself, he is too big But she is hardly wounded, and it is she who is going to die . . . Can you understand that?

*First Servant* You have seen the wound?

*The Old Servant* As I see you, my daughter—I saw everything, you understand I saw it before all the others . . . A tiny little wound under her little left breast,—a little wound that wouldn't kill a pigeon. Is it natural?

*First Servant.* Yes, yes, there is something underneath . . .

*Second Servant* Yes, but she was delivered of her babe three days ago . . .

*The Old Servant* Exactly! . . . She was delivered on her death-bed, is that a little sign?—And what a child! Have you seen it? A wee little girl a beggar would not bring into the world A little wax figure that came much too soon, a little wax figure that must live in lambs' wool Yes, yes; it is not happiness that has come into the house . . .

*First Servant* Yes, yes, it is the hand of God that has been stirring . . .

*Second Servant* Yes, yes; all that did not happen without reason. . .

*Third Servant* It is as good Lord Pelléas . . . where is he?—No one knows . . .

*The Old Servant* Yes, yes, everybody knows But nobody dare speak of it . . .

One does not speak of this, . . . one does not speak of that, one speaks no more of anything, one no longer speaks truth

But I know he was found at the bottom of Blind Man's Spring, but no one, no one could see him Well, well, we shall only know all that at the last day . . .

*First Servant* I dare not sleep here any longer

*The Old Servant* Yes, yes, once ill-fortune is in the house, one keeps silence in vain

*Third Servant.* Yes, it finds you all the same . . .

*The Old Servant* Yes, yes, but we do not go where we would . . .

*Fourth Servant* Yes, yes; we do not do what we would . . .

*First Servant* They are afraid of us now

*Second Servant* They all keep silence

*Third Servant.* They cast down their eyes in the corridors

*Fourth Servant* They do not speak any more except in a low voice

*Fifth Servant* You would think they had all done it together

*Sixth Servant* One doesn't know what they have done . . .

*Seventh Servant* What is to be done when the masters are afraid? [A silence]

*First Servant* I no longer hear the children screaming

*Second Servant* They are sitting down before the ventilator

*Third Servant* They are huddled against each other

*The Old Servant* I no longer hear anything in the house . . .

*First Servant* You no longer even hear the children breathe . . .

*The Old Servant* Come, come, it is time to go up . . . [Exeunt, in silence]

SCENE TWO—An apartment in the castle ARKEL, GOLAUD, and the PHYSICIAN discovered in one corner of the room MÉLISANDE is stretched upon her bed

*The Physician* It cannot be of that little wound she is dying, a bird would not have died of it . . . It is not you, then, who have killed her, good my lord, do not be so disconsolate . . . She could not have lived She was born without reason . . . to die, and she dies without reason And then, it is not sure we shall not save her . . .

*Arkël* No, no, it seems to me we keep too

silent, in spite of ourselves, in her room  
It is not a good sign      Look how she sleeps  
    slowly, slowly,      it is as if her soul  
was cold forever

*Golaud* I have killed her without cause!  
I have killed her without cause! .      Is it  
not enough to make the stones weep?  
They had kissed like little children      They  
had simply kissed      They were brother  
and sister      And I, and I at once!      I  
did it in spite of myself, look you. . . I did  
it in spite of myself

*The Physician* Stop, I think she is wak-  
ing

*Mélsande*. Open the window, . . . open  
the window

*Arkël* Shall I open this one, *Mélsande*?

*Mélsande* No, no, the great window  
the great window      It is to see

*Arkël* Is not the sea air too cold to-night?

*The Physician* Do it, do it

*Mélsande* Thanks.      Is it sunset?

*Arkël* Yes, it is sunset on the sea, it is  
late—How are you, *Mélsande*?

*Mélsande* Well, well—Why do you ask  
that? I have never been better—And yet it  
seems to me I know something

*Arkël* What sayest thou?—I do not un-  
derstand thee

*Mélsande* Neither do I understand all I  
say, you see      I do not know what I am  
saying      I do not know what I know  
I no longer say what I would . . .

*Arkël* Why, yes! why, yes!      I am  
quite happy to hear thee speak so, thou hast  
raved a little these last days, and one no  
longer understood thee      But now all that  
is far away

*Mélsande* I do not know      —Are you  
all alone in the room, grandfather?

*Arkël* No, there is the physician, besides,  
who cured thee

*Mélsande* Ah! . . .

*Arkël* And then there is still some one  
else

*Mélsande* Who is it?

*Arkël* It is      thou must not be fright-  
ened.      He does not wish thee the least  
harm, be sure      If thou'rt afraid, he will  
go away      He is very unhappy

*Mélsande* Who is it?

*Arkël* It is thy      thy husband. . . It  
is *Golaud*

*Mélsande* *Golaud* is here? Why does he  
not come by me?

*Golaud* [dragging himself toward the bed].

*Mélsande*      *Mélsande*

*Mélsande* Is it you, *Golaud*? I should  
hardly recognize you any more      It is the  
evening sunlight in my eyes      Why look  
you on the walls? You have grown thin and  
old      Is it a long while since we saw each  
other?

*Golaud* [To *ARKËL* and the *PHYSICIAN*]  
Will you withdraw a moment, if you please,  
if you please?      I will leave the door wide  
open      One moment only      I would say  
something to her, else I could not die  
Will you?—Go clear to the end of the corri-  
dor, you can come back at once, at once  
Do not refuse me this      I am a wretch

[*Exit ARKËL and the PHYSICIAN*]—*Mélsande*,  
hast thou pity on me, as I have pity on thee?

*Mélsande*?      Dost thou forgive me,  
*Mélsande*?

*Mélsande* Yes, yes, I do forgive thee  
What must I forgive?

*Golaud* I have wrought thee so much ill,  
*Mélsande*      I cannot tell thee the ill I  
have wrought thee      But I see it, I see it  
so clearly to-day      since the first day . . .  
And all I did not know till now leaps in my  
eyes to-night      And it is all my fault, all  
that has happened, all that will happen .

If I could tell it, thou wouldst see as I do!

I see all! I see all!      But I loved thee  
so!      I loved thee so!      But now there is  
some one dying      It is I who am dying

And I would know      I would ask  
thee      Thou'lt bear me no ill-will      I  
would      The truth must be told to a dying  
man      He must know the truth, or else he  
could not sleep      Swearst thou to tell me  
the truth?

*Mélsande* Yes

*Golaud* Didst thou love *Pelléas*?

*Mélsande* Why, yes, I loved him—  
Where is he?

*Golaud* Thou dost not understand me?—  
Thou wilt not understand me?—It seems to  
me      it seems to me      Well, then, here  
I ask thee if thou lovest him with a forbid-  
den love?      Wert thou      were you guilty?  
Say, say, yes, yes, yes!

*Mélsande* No, no, we were not guilty—  
Why do you ask that?

*Golaud* *Mélsande*!      tell me the truth,  
for the love of God!

*Mélsande* Why have I not told the truth?

*Golaud* Do not lie so any more, at the moment of death!

*Mélsande* Who is dying?—Is it I?

*Golaud* Thou, thou! And I, I too, after thee! And we must have the truth. We must have the truth at last, dost thou understand? . . . Tell me all! Tell me all! I forgive thee all! . . .

*Mélsande* Why am I going to die?—I did not know it

*Golaud* Thou knowest it now! . . . It is time! It is time! . . . Quick! quick! . . . The truth! the truth! . . .

*Mélsande* The truth . . . the truth

*Golaud* Where art thou?—*Mélsande*!—Where art thou?—It is not natural! *Mélsande* Where art thou!—Where goest thou? [*Perceiving ARKĒL and the PHYSICIAN at the door of the room*]—Yes, yes, you may come in . . . I know nothing, it is useless. It is too late, she is already too far away from us . . . I shall never know! . . . I shall die here like a blind man! . . .

*ArkĒl* What have you done? You will kill her . . .

*Golaud* I have already killed her. . . .

*ArkĒl* *Mélsande* . . .

*Mélsande* Is it you, grandfather?

*ArkĒl* Yes, my daughter . . . What would you have me do?

*Mélsande* Is it true that the winter is beginning? . . .

*ArkĒl* Why dost thou ask?

*Mélsande* Because it is cold, and there are no more leaves . . .

*ArkĒl* Thou art cold?—Wilt thou have the windows closed?

*Mélsande* No, no, . . . not till the sun be at the bottom of the sea—It sinks slowly, then it is the winter beginning?

*ArkĒl*. Yes—Thou dost not like the winter?

*Mélsande* Oh! no. I am afraid of the cold—I am so afraid of the great cold

*ArkĒl* Dost thou feel better?

*Mélsande* Yes, yes, I have no longer all those qualms

*ArkĒl* Wouldst thou see thy child?

*Mélsande* What child?

*ArkĒl* Thy child—Thou art a mother. Thou hast brought a little daughter into the world . . .

*Mélsande* Where is she?

*ArkĒl*. Here. . . .

*Mélsande* It is strange. I cannot lift my arms to take her . . .

*ArkĒl*. Because you are still very weak. I will hold her myself, look

*Mélsande* She does not laugh . . . She is little. She is going to weep too . . . I pity her

[*The room has been invaded, little by little, by the women servants of the castle, who range themselves in silence along the walls and wait*]

*Golaud* [*rising abruptly*] What is the matter?—What are all these women coming here for?

*The Physician* It is the servants. . . .

*ArkĒl* Who was it called them?

*The Physician* It was not I . . .

*Golaud* Why do you come here?—No one has asked for you. What come you here to do?—But what is it, then?—Answer me!

[*The servants make no answer*]

*ArkĒl* Do not speak too loud. She is going to sleep, she has closed her eyes . . .

*Golaud* It is not . . . ?

*The Physician* No, no, see, she breathes

*ArkĒl* Her eyes are full of tears—It is her soul weeping now. Why does she stretch her arms out so?—What would she?

*The Physician* It is toward the child, without doubt. It is the struggle of motherhood against

*Golaud* At this moment?—At this moment?—You must say. Say! Say! . . .

*The Physician* Perhaps

*Golaud* At once? Oh! oh! I must tell her. —*Mélsande*! *Mélsande*! . . . Leave me alone! leave me alone with her! . . .

*ArkĒl* No, no, do not come near. Trouble her not. Speak no more to her.

You know not what the soul is . . .

*Golaud* It is not my fault! . . . It is not my fault!

*ArkĒl* Hush! . . . Hush! . . . We must speak softly now—She must not be disturbed. The human soul is very silent.

The human soul likes to depart alone. It suffers so timorously . . . But the sadness, *Golaud* . . . the sadness of all we see! Oh! oh! oh!

[*At this moment, all the servants fall suddenly on their knees at the back of the chamber*]

*ArkĒl* [*turning*]. What is the matter!

*The Physician* [approaching the bed and feeling the body] They are right

[A long silence]

*Arkël* I saw nothing —Are you sure?

*The Physician* Yes, yes

*Arkël* I heard nothing      So quick, so quick!  
All at once!      She goes without a word

*Golaud* [sobbing] Oh! oh! oh!

*Arkël* Do not stay here, Golaud . . . She must have silence now      Come, come  
It is terrible, but it is not your fault. . . .

'Twas a little being, so quiet, so fearful, and so silent      'Twas a poor little mysterious being, like everybody      She lies there as if she were the big sister of her child . . .  
Come, come      My God! My God! . . .  
I shall never understand it at all      Let us not stay here —Come, the child must not stay here in this room      She must live now in her place      It is the poor little one's turn .      [They go out in silence]

THE END



LIGHT-O'-LOVE

(LIEBELEI)

By ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

*Translated from the German by BAYARD QUINCY MORGAN*

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## ARTHUR SCHNITZLER AND HIS PLAYS

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER, the author of *Light-o'-Love*, the greatest dramatist of Austria since Grillparzer, was born in Vienna, and was graduated from the University of Vienna in 1885 as a doctor of medicine. Like Tchekhov, the Russian dramatist, who was also a physician, he practiced his profession with ardor and success, and, as was also the case with Tchekhov, that profession strongly influenced his plays. Like Tchekhov, too, he became famous as writer of fiction as well as a dramatist. Schnitzler was a pure naturalist, recording life dispassionately as he saw it, without bias, but with all the subtle insight into the springs of action and all the tolerant understanding characteristic of a physician who is also a psychologist. He was as far as possible removed from the reformers, for he had not even any explanation of life, any "synthesis," any "philosophy." He was calmly contemplative, but he was not devoid of pity and sympathy, he was even, at times, not without tenderness. He maintained in turn two very different points of view as he surveyed the world of human beings. From one he saw amusing creatures disporting themselves, a careless, graceful, sophisticated set, yet even in their careless play suggesting how easily their comedy may turn to tragedy. From the other, he saw rather care-worn men and women seeking a way out of life's perplexities, suffering from its disillusionments. The merely careless ones he pictured in such plays as *Anatol*, the tired and disillusioned, in *The Lonely Way*. Such plays, whether humorous or tragic, are a characteristic product of mid-Europe, they spring from the soil of an old and sophisticated civilization, they disregard, perhaps they are not even aware of, the "moral standards" in sex that dictate the conventions of younger and more self-conscious peoples, and at times they show a certain weariness and disillusionment antipathetic to more naïve and optimistic civilizations.

Schnitzler handled his technique with the ease of a virtuoso. It is more successful, perhaps, in the one-act form (of which he was the acknowledged master), as is shown in *Literature* and *Living Hours*. Technically, his most distinctive achievement is his brilliant dialogue, graceful, witty, cynical, the best of its kind in modern continental drama, a dialogue that has exercised a profound influence upon, for instance, Benavente. Yet, in spite of the distinguished ease with which he moved in the world of the careless, cynical, sophisticated persons who use such speech, he seemed still more at home in "the twilight of the soul," a world in which regret for past deeds, hopeless desires, inhibitions that strangle and destroy, create an atmosphere of half-lights, some of which seem to be cast from a realm of the sub-conscious just beyond the threshold. Here Schnitzler was of the "new psychology", and the very half-tones, reticences, and suggestions of his delicate method often say more than the most voluble speech.

*Light-o'-Love* represents a mean between the tone and method of *Anatol* and those of *The Lonely Way*. It has much of the grace and charm of the one and something of the regret and disillusionment of the other. It shows how close the comedy of the careless is to the sheer tragedy of the disillusioned. In spite of the profound social changes in Austria within the past two decades, it retains its power, since this is founded upon its subtle and sympathetic delineation of permanent and universal human traits.

*Light-o'-Love* was produced first in Vienna at the Hofburg theater in October, 1895. Its first production in English was in New York in February, 1905, under the title of *Flirtation*, by the Progressive Stage Society. Under the title of *The Reckoning* it was again produced in New York in 1907, and still again, this time in German, in 1912. In the meantime it had been produced in English in London in May, 1909. In 1929, it was revived in New York under the title *Playing with Love*. The author died in 1931.



## CHARACTERS

HANS VYRING, *violinist at the city theatre*

CHRISTINE, *his daughter*

TONI SCHLAGER, *milliner*

CATHERINE BINDER, *wife of a stocking-maker*

LENA, *her nine-year-old daughter*

FRITZ LOHEIMER, } *young men*

THEODORE KAISER, }

A GENTLEMAN

*The action takes place in Vienna at the present day*

## LIGHT-O'-LOVE

### ACT ONE

*Fritz's room Cozy but elegantly furnished*

*Theodore [Enters in advance He carries a stick, has an overcoat flung over his arm, takes off his hat upon entering]*

*Fritz [Outside] So nobody has been here?*

*Voice No, sir*

*Fritz [Entering] I suppose we might let the carriage go?*

*Theodore Of course I thought you had*

*Fritz [Goes to the door] Send the carriage away And you can go, too I don't need you any more [Returning] Why don't you lay down your things?*

*Theodore [At the desk] Here are a couple of letters [Throws coat and hat on a chair, keeps his stick]*

*Fritz [Hastens to the desk] Oh!*

*Theodore Now, now! I believe you're frightened!*

*Fritz From dad. [Opens a second letter] From Lensky*

*Theodore Don't let me disturb you*

*Fritz [Skims the letters]*

*Theodore What does your father say?*

*Fritz Nothing special. He wants me to spend a week on the estate at Whit-sundide*

*Theodore Excellent plan I'd like to send you there for six months*

*Fritz [Turns to face him]*

*Theodore I certainly would!—riding, driving, fresh air, dairy-maids—*

*Fritz Idiot, there aren't any dairy-farms out there*

*Theodore Well, you know what I mean, don't you?*

*Fritz Will you come along?*

*Theodore You know I can't*

*Fritz Why not?*

*Theodore My dear fellow, I have my doctor's exam coming! If I went along it would be only for the sake of keeping you there*

*Fritz Oh, come, you needn't worry about me*

*Theodore You see, all you need is fresh air, I'm convinced of that—I saw that to-day Out yonder in the open where we found the genuine green springtime, you were a very pleasant fellow again*

*Fritz Thanks*

*Theodore And now—now of course you are collapsing We're too close to the dangerous atmospheric zone again*

*Fritz [Makes a gesture of irritation]*

*Theodore Why, you've no idea how jolly you were out there You were actually reasonable for once, it was like the good old days And then a couple of days ago, when we were out with those two jolly little girls, you were very nice, but now—that's all over again, and you find it absolutely necessary to think—[With ironical pathos]—of that woman*

*Fritz [Rises, vexed]*

*Theodore You don't know me, my dear fellow I don't intend to stand that any longer*

*Fritz My goodness, but you're ambitious!*

*Theodore Oh, I don't demand of you that you forget—[as before]—that woman.*

*I only hope—[warmly]—my dear Fritz, that this miserable affair, that keeps me trembling for you all the time, means no more to you than any trivial love affair.*

*Look here, Fritz, some day, when you stop worshipping "that woman," you'll be surprised how congenial she is to you Then you'll find out that there's nothing demonic in her at all, but that she is a very sweet little woman—one that you can have plenty of fun with, just as you can with all women that are young and pretty, and that have a little temperament*

*Fritz Why do you say "tremble for me"?*

*Theodore You know why I must confess that I am in constant terror that you will run off with her some fine day*

*Fritz That was what you meant?*

*Theodore [After a short pause] That isn't the only danger*

*Fritz Right you are, Theodore—there are others, too*

*Theodore.* But then we never do anything silly.

*Fritz.* [To himself] There are others, too . . .

*Theodore.* What's the matter? . . . You're thinking of something in particular

*Fritz.* Oh, no, I'm not . . . [Glances at the window] She was deceived once before

*Theodore.* What? . . . What's that? . . . I don't understand you.

*Fritz.* Oh, nothing.

*Theodore.* What? Do talk sense.

*Fritz.* She's been afraid lately . . . at times

*Theodore.* Why? — There must be a reason for it

*Fritz.* Not at all. Nervousness—[ironically]—an uneasy conscience, if you will

*Theodore.* You say she was deceived once—

*Fritz.* Well, yes—and again to-day, I suppose.

*Theodore.* To-day—well, what does all this mean?

*Fritz.* [After a slight pause] She thinks . . . we are watched

*Theodore.* What?

*Fritz.* She sees apparitions; really, she has actual hallucinations [At the window] She sees some person standing on the street corner, . . . through the crack in the curtain, and thinks—[Breaks off] Is it possible, anyway, to recognize a face at this distance?

*Theodore.* Scarcely

*Fritz.* Why, that's what I say But then that's terrible She's afraid to go out, she has all sorts of queer feelings, she gets hysterical, she wants to die with me—

*Theodore.* Of course

*Fritz.* [Short pause] To-day I had to go down and take a look Went down as cheerfully as if I were leaving the house alone, of course there wasn't a familiar face to be seen anywhere . . .

*Theodore.* [Is silent]

*Fritz.* Well, that ought to set fears at rest, oughtn't it? A man can't suddenly be swallowed up by the earth, hey? . . . Answer, can't you?

*Theodore.* What sort of an answer do you want? Of course a man can't be swallowed up. But a man can hide inside the gates.

*Fritz.* I looked behind them all

*Theodore.* You must have looked very innocent at that

*Fritz.* There was nobody there. I tell you it's hallucinations

*Theodore.* Certainly. But it ought to teach you to be more careful

*Fritz.* And I couldn't have helped knowing it, if he suspected it Why, I ate supper with them yesterday after the play—with him and her—and it was so pleasant! . . . ridiculous, I tell you!

*Theodore.* I beg of you Fritz, be sensible; do me that favor Give up this whole cursed affair, for my sake, if nothing else I have nerves, too . . . I know you're not the kind of man who can escape from such an affair unaided, and so I made it so easy for you—gave you a chance to save yourself by starting another . . .

*Fritz.* You did?

*Theodore.* Well, didn't I take you along with me when I had an appointment with little Miss Toni a while back? And didn't I ask her to bring along her prettiest friend? And can you deny that you like her?

*Fritz.* Certainly, she is sweet! . . . So sweet! And you have no idea how I longed for such an affection as that, so sweet and quiet, that would hover about me and soothe me, and help me to recover from these everlasting irritations and torments

*Theodore.* That's exactly it Recover! That's the deeper purpose of it They help us to recover That's why I'm against these so-called interesting women. It's not the business of women to be interesting, but to be agreeable. You must seek happiness where I have sought and found it—where there are no grand scenes, no dangers, no tragic entanglements—where the beginning has no special difficulties, and the ending no torments—where you take your first kiss with a smile, and part with very gentle emotion

*Fritz.* Yes, that's it.

*Theodore.* Those women are so happy in their healthy every-day womanhood—what compels us to make demons or angels out of them at all cost?

*Fritz.* She is really a treasure So affectionate, so dear Often it seems to me she is too dear for me

*Theodore.* You're incorrigible, apparently If you intend to take that affair seriously again . . .

*Fritz* No, no, not a thought of it We are agreed, I need to recover

*Theodore* If you did, I'd give you up for good I've had enough of your love-tragedies You bore me with them And if you feel like coming at me with your famous "conscience," I'll give you my simple rule for treating such cases Better it were I than some one else For that "some one else" is as sure as fate itself

[*There is a ring*]

*Fritz* What's that now? . .

*Theodore* Go and see There you are, all pale again! Set your fears at rest It's the two sweet little girls

*Fritz* [*Agreeably surprised*] What?

*Theodore* I took the liberty of inviting them here to-day

*Fritz* [*Going out*] Oh, you—why didn't you tell me? Now I've sent away my man

*Theodore* So much the cozier

*Fritz* [*Outside*] Greetings, Toni

*Toni* [*Enters, carrying a package*]

*Fritz* [*Re-enters behind her*] And where's Christine?

*Toni* She'll be here soon Greetings, Dore

*Theodore* [*Kisses her hand*]

*Toni* You'll have to excuse us, Mr Fritz, but Theodore invited us

*Fritz* Why, it was a splendid idea Only he forgot something, Theodore did

*Theodore* Theodore forgot nothing! [*Takes the package from Toni*] Did you bring everything I wrote down for you?

*Toni* Of course [*To Fritz*] Where can I put it?

*Fritz* Just give it to me, Toni, we'll put it on the sideboard for the present

*Toni* I bought something else, Dore, besides what you told me

*Fritz* Give me your hat, Toni, that's right [*Lays it on the piano, also her boa*]

*Theodore* [*Dubiously*] What?

*Toni* A coffee cream-cake

*Theodore* Oh, what a sweet tooth!

*Fritz* Well, but tell me, why didn't Christine come with you?

*Toni* She's going to take her father to the theatre first Then she'll come along on the street car

*Theodore* What an affectionate daughter!

*Toni* I should say so, and especially since he went into mourning

*Theodore* Why, who died there, anyway?

*Toni* The old gentleman's sister

*Theodore* Ah, a widow?

*Toni* No, it was an old maiden lady, who has lived with them always Well, and so he feels so lonesome, somehow

*Theodore* He's a little man with short gray hair—her father— isn't he?

*Toni* [*Shakes her head*] No, he has long hair

*Fritz* How do you come to know him?

*Theodore* Recently I was in the theatre with Lensky, and I took a look at the men playing the bass-voils

*Toni* Why, he doesn't play the bass-viol—he plays the violin

*Theodore* Oh, is that so? I thought he played the bass-viol [*Toni laughs*] Nothing funny about that, how should I know, child?

*Toni* What a beautiful place you have, Mr Fritz—just wonderful! What view is that?

*Fritz* This window opens on Straw Lane, and in the next room—

*Theodore* [*Quickly*] Do tell me, why are you so formal, you two?

*Toni* At supper we'll get better acquainted

*Theodore* A lady of principle, I see Well, that's some comfort, just the same How's your mother, anyhow?

*Toni* [*Turns to him, her face suddenly showing concern*] Only think, she's got—

*Theodore* Toothache, I know, I know Your mother always has the toothache She ought to go to a dentist one of these times

*Toni* But the doctor says it's only rheumatic pains

*Theodore* [*Laughing*] Well, if it's rheumatic

*Toni* [*An album in her hand*] Nothing but pretty things [*Turning the pages*] Who is that? . . . Why, that's you, Mr Fritz, in uniform? You're in the army?

*Fritz* Yes

*Toni* Dragon!—Are you in the yellows or the blacks?

*Fritz* [*Smiling*] In the yellows

*Toni* [*As in a reverie*] The yellows

*Theodore.* There she goes a-dreaming. Wake up, Toni!

*Toni* But now you're lieutenant in the reserves?

*Fritz* Surely

*Toni* You must look very nice in the fur cap

*Theodore* How much she knows about it!—Look here, Toni, I'm in the army, too

*Toni* Are you in the dragoons, too?

*Theodore* Yes

*Toni* Well, why can't you tell a body that?

*Theodore.* I want to be loved for myself

*Toni* Come, Dore, you must put on your uniform some time when we're going out together

*Theodore* In August there will be manoeuvres, anyway

*Toni* Heavens! by August—

*Theodore* Yes, that's so—eternal love doesn't last that long

*Toni* Who thinks about August in May? Isn't that so, Mr Fritz?—Say, Mr Fritz, why did you run away from us yesterday?

*Fritz* What do you mean?

*Toni* Why—after the play.

*Fritz* Didn't Theodore make my excuses to you?

*Theodore* To be sure, I excused you

*Toni* What good do your excuses do me, or rather Christine? When a man makes a promise, he ought to keep it

*Fritz* I really would rather have gone with you

*Toni* Really?

*Fritz* But I couldn't You saw yourselves I was in a box with friends, and afterward I couldn't get away from them

*Toni* Yes, you couldn't get away from the pretty ladies Do you think we didn't see you from the gallery?

*Fritz* Well, I saw you, too

*Toni* You were sitting backwards in the box

*Fritz* Not all the time

*Toni* But most of it Behind a lady with a black velvet dress you sat and kept—[Imitating]—looking forward like this

*Fritz* You must have watched me closely

*Toni* Why, it's nothing to me But if I were Christine Why did Theodore have time after the play? Why doesn't he have to take supper with friends?

*Theodore* [Proudly] Why don't I have to take supper with friends?

[There is a ring Fritz hastens out]

*Theodore* Toni, you can do me a favor.

*Toni* [Assumes questioning expression]

*Theodore* Forget your military recollections—at least, for a time

*Toni* Why, I haven't any.

*Theodore* Come, now, you didn't learn all that just by accident, that's plain enough.

*Christine* [Enters with flowers in her hand Fritz behind her With a trace of embarrassment] Good-evening [General salutation To Fritz] Are you glad we came—You're not angry?

*Fritz* But—my dear child! Sometimes, you know Theodore is cleverer than I am

*Theodore* Well, is your father fiddling by now?

*Christine* Surely, I took him to the theatre

*Fritz* Toni told us

*Christine.* [To Toni] And Catherine stopped me, too

*Toni* Oh, pshaw! the false cat!

*Christine* Oh, no, she isn't false at all; she is very good to me

*Toni* You trust every one, anyway.

*Christine* Why should she be false to me?

*Fritz* Who is Catherine?

*Toni* The wife of a stocking-maker, and she's always vexed because some girls are younger than she is

*Christine* Why, she's quite young herself

*Fritz* Bother Catherine!—What have you got there?

*Christine* I brought along a few flowers for you

*Fritz* [Takes them from her and kisses her hand] You're a little angel Here, we'll put them in the vase

*Theodore* No, no! You've no talent as decorator The flowers will be scattered at random on the table . That is, later on, when the table is set We really ought to fix it so that they would fall from the ceiling But that can't be done.

*Fritz* [Laughing] Scarcely.

*Theodore* Meanwhile we'll put them in here, after all [Puts them into the vase]

*Toni* Children, it's getting dark!

*Fritz* [Helps CHRISTINE to take off her coat, and she takes off her hat He puts

hat and coat on a chair in the background ]  
We'll light the lamp right away

*Theodore* Lamp! I should say not!  
Candles we must have Their light is so  
much prettier Come, Toni, you can help  
me [*He and Toni light the candles, in  
the branched candelabra before the pier-  
glass, one on the desk, two candles on the  
sideboard Meanwhile FRITZ and CHRISTINE  
converse*]

*Fritz* How are you, sweetheart?

*Christine* I'm all right now

*Fritz* Well, but not at other times?

*Christine* I have longed so for you

*Fritz* Why, we saw each other only yes-  
terday

*Christine* Saw each other . from away  
off [*Shyly*] *Fritz*, it wasn't very nice  
of you to

*Fritz* Yes, I know, Toni told me But  
you're always a child I couldn't get away  
You've got to understand such things

*Christine* Yes . *Fritz*, who were  
the people in the box?

*Fritz* Friends of mine—it doesn't matter  
what their names are

*Christine* Well, who was the lady in the  
black velvet dress?

*Fritz* Child, I have no memory for  
dresses

*Christine* [*Coaxingly*] Come, come!

*Fritz* That is to say, I do have a  
sort of a memory for them—in certain  
cases For example, I remember very well  
that dark-blue waist you had on the first  
time we saw each other And the black  
and white one you wore to the theatre  
yesterday

*Christine* Why, I'm wearing it to-day!

*Fritz* Sure enough, from the dis-  
tance, you know, it looks different—I mean  
it! Oh, and that medallion—I know that,  
too

*Christine* [*Smiling*] When did I wear  
that?

*Fritz* Oh,—that time we went walking  
in the public gardens, where all the children  
were playing— isn't that right?

*Christine* Yes So you do think of  
me sometimes?

*Fritz* Rather frequently, my child

*Christine* Not so often as I think of you  
I am always thinking of you all day  
long, . and I can only be happy when I  
see you

- *Fritz* Then don't we see each other often  
enough?

*Christine* Often . . .

*Fritz* Certainly In the summer we  
shan't see each other so much Just think!  
Suppose, for example, I went away for a  
couple of weeks—what would you say?

*Christine* [*Anxiously*] What? You are  
going away?

*Fritz* No And still it might be pos-  
sible that I would like the notion of being  
all alone for a week

*Christine* Oh, why?

*Fritz* I'm simply talking about possibili-  
ties I know myself, I get such notions  
And you, too, might some time take the  
whim of not wanting to see me for a few  
days . I'll always understand that

*Christine* No, I'll never have that whim,  
*Fritz*

*Fritz* You can't tell about that

*Christine* But I can I love you

*Fritz* I love you, too, very much

*Christine* But you are everything to me,  
*Fritz*, for you I could—[*Breaks off*] No,  
I can't imagine an hour ever coming when  
I wouldn't want to see you As long as I  
live, *Fritz*—

*Fritz* [*Interrupts*] Child, I beseech you,  
don't say anything like that I  
don't like big words We won't talk about  
eternity

*Christine* [*Smiling sadly*] Have no fear,  
*Fritz* . . I know this can't be for al-  
ways

*Fritz* You misunderstand me, child Of  
course it's possible—[*Laughing*]—that we  
simply won't be able to live without each  
other, but we can't tell for sure, can we?  
We're only human

*Theodore* [*Pointing to the lighted  
candles*] Kindly turn your eyes upon that  
Isn't that different from a stupid lamp?

*Fritz* You're really a born decorator

*Theodore* Children, what do you say—  
shall we think about eating?

*Toni* Yes! Come, *Christine*

*Fritz* Wait, I'll show you where to find  
everything

*Toni* First of all, we need a table-cloth

*Theodore* [*With German accent, as on the  
vaudeville stage*] "A table-clot'?"

*Fritz* What?

*Theodore* Don't you remember that fel-  
low in the Orpheum? "Dot is a table-clot'"

"Dot is a shtool" "Dot is a liddle pianino"

*Tom* Say, Dore, when are you going to the Orpheum with me? You promised me a little while ago. Then Christine will come along, and Mr Fritz, too. [*She is just taking from Fritz the table-cloth which he has taken out of the sideboard*] Then we'll be your friends in the box.

*Fritz* Yes, yes

*Tom* Then the lady with the black velvet dress can go home alone

*Fritz*. Why do you keep thinking about that lady in black? It's too stupid

*Tom* Oh, we don't think about her. There . . . And the silver? [*Fritz shows her the things in the open sideboard*] Yes.

. . . And the plates? . . . Yes, thanks. There, now we can do it alone all right. Go, go away now, you're only getting in our way

*Theodore* [*Has meanwhile stretched out on the couch, Fritz advances toward him*] You'll excuse me

*Tom* Did you see the picture of Fritz in his uniform?

*Christine* No

*Tom* You must have a look at it. Swell! [*They talk on*]

*Theodore* Such evenings are my delight, Fritz

*Fritz* Well, they are nice.

*Theodore*. Then I feel so cozy. . . . Don't you?

*Fritz* Oh, I wish I could always feel so contented

*Tom* Tell me, Mr. Fritz, is there coffee in the machine?

*Fritz* Yes. You can start the lamp under it right away—it takes a good hour on that machine, before the coffee is done.

*Theodore* I'd give a dozen demoniac women for a sweet girl like that

*Fritz* There's no comparison

*Theodore* You see, we hate the women that we love—and only love the women that are indifferent to us.

*Fritz*. [*Laughs*]

*Tom*. What's the joke? We'd like to hear it, too

*Theodore* Nothing for you, children. We're philosophizing—If this were to be our last meeting with these girls, we'd be just as jolly, wouldn't we?

*Fritz*. The last time? . . . Well, there's

certainly something melancholy about that. Parting always gives pain, even if you've been looking forward to it eagerly for a long time.

*Christine*. Say, Fritz, where's the small silver?

*Fritz*. [*Goes rear to the sideboard*] Here it is, sweetheart

*Toni* [*Comes forward, runs her hand through THEODORE'S hair, he still reclining on the couch*]

*Theodore* You pussy-cat!

*Fritz* [*Opens the package TONI brought*.] Grand!

*Christine* [*To Fritz*] You have everything in such good order.

*Fritz*. Yes [*Arranges the things. TONI brought—sardines, cold meat, butter, cheese*]

*Christine* Fritz . . . won't you tell me?

*Fritz*. Tell you what?

*Christine*. [*Very timidly*] Who the lady was

*Fritz*. No; don't make me cross [*More gently*] You see, that's one thing we agreed upon expressly. No questions asked. That's the nice thing about it. When I am with you the world disappears, like that— [*Snaps his fingers*] I don't ask you any questions, either.

*Christine*. You can ask me anything you like.

*Fritz* But I don't. I don't want to know anything.

*Tom*. [*Returns to table*] Goodness, what a mess you're making! [*Takes the edibles, puts them on the plates*] There.

*Theodore* Say, Fritz, have you anything to drink here?

*Fritz* Oh, yes, I think I can find something [*Exit into front room*]

*Theodore* [*Raises himself and inspects the table*] Good

*Tom*. There, I think we've got everything now

*Fritz* [*Returns with some bottles*] Here's something to drink, too

*Theodore* Where are the roses that fall from the ceiling?

*Tom* That's right, we forgot the roses [*She takes the roses out of the vase, climbs on a chair, and lets the roses fall on the table*] There!

*Christine*. My, what a wild girl you are to-night!

*Theodore* Here, not on the plates  
*Fritz* Where do you want to sit, Christine?

*Theodore* Where is the cork-screw?

*Fritz* [Gets one from the sideboard]  
 Here is one

*Tom* [Tries to open a bottle]

*Fritz* No, let me do that

*Theodore* No, let me do it [Takes bottle and cork-screw from him] Meanwhile you might—[Moves his fingers as at the piano]

*Tom* Yes, yes, that's grand! . [She runs to the piano, takes the things off it, and opens it]

*Fritz* [To Christine] Shall I?

*Christine* Oh, please do, I've wanted that for so long

*Fritz* [At the piano] You can play a little too?

*Christine* [With a gesture] Oh goodness

*Tom* She plays fine, Christine does she can sing too

*Fritz* Really? You never told me that

*Christine* Did you ever ask me?

*Fritz* Where did you learn to sing?

*Christine* I really never learned Father taught me a little—but I haven't got much voice And you know, since auntie died, the one that always lived with us, it's even quieter at home than it was before

*Fritz* What do you do, anyway, all day long?

*Christine* Oh, I have plenty to do!

*Fritz* Around the house, I suppose?

*Christine* Yes And then I copy notes quite a lot

*Theodore* Music notes?

*Christine* Surely

*Theodore* They must pay you tremendously for that [The others laugh] Well, I'd pay tremendously for it Music copying must be a terrible task, I think

*Tom* There's no sense in her working so hard, either If I had as much voice as you have, I'd have been in the theatre long ago

*Theodore* You wouldn't even need a voice Of course you do nothing all day, hey?

*Tom* Well, I like that! I have two little brothers that are going to school I have to dress them in the morning And then I help them with their lessons—

*Theodore* That's a lie, every word of it

*Tom* Well, if you won't believe me—

And until last autumn I was in a store from eight in the morning till eight at night

*Theodore* [Mockingly] Where was that?

*Tom* In a millinery store Mother wants me to go back there

*Theodore* [As above] Why did you leave it?

*Fritz* [To Christine] Then you must sing something for us

*Theodore* Come on, children, let's eat first, and then you'll play, won't you?

*Fritz* [Rising, to CHRISTINE] Come, sweetheart [Leads her to the table]

*Tom* The coffee! There's the coffee boiling over, and we haven't begun to eat

*Theodore* Nothing matters now

*Tom* But it's boiling over! [Blows out the flame]

[All sit down at the table]

*Theodore* What will you have, Tom? But let me tell you this the cake comes last! First you've got to eat nothing but sour things

*Fritz* [Pours out the wine]

*Theodore* Not that way we do it differently now Don't you know the latest fashion? [Stands up, affects magniloquence, to CHRISTINE, bottle in hand] Special quality, genuine Johannisberger, eighteen hundred—[Mumbles the last figures Fills glass, then goes to TOM, to FRITZ, repeating the same ceremony and words, finally stands at his own place, and repeats as before Seats himself]

*Tom* [Laughing] He's always doing something silly

*Theodore* [Raises his glass, all clink] Prost

*Tom* Your health, Theodore

*Theodore* [Rising] Ladies and Gentlemen

*Fritz* Oh, not yet!

*Theodore* [Sits again] Well, I can wait

*Tom* Oh, that's what I like,—after-dinner speeches I have a cousin that always makes his speeches in rhymes

*Theodore* What regiment is he in?

*Tom* Come, stop that He talks it off by heart and in rhyme, and it's just splendid, Christine And he's an elderly gentleman now, too

*Theodore* Oh, it sometimes happens that elderly gentlemen can still talk in rhyme

*Fritz* But you're not drinking at all, Christine! [Clinks with her]



*Theodore* [*Clunks with TONI*] To the old gentleman who talks in rhymes

*Toni* [*Merrily*] To the young gentlemen, even if they don't talk at all for example, to Mr Fritz Say, Mr Fritz, now we'll drink to our better acquaintance, if you wish—and Christine must do the same with Theodore

*Theodore* But not with this wine, that's not the right kind for it [*Rises, takes another bottle, same ceremony as before*] Xeres de la Frontera mille huit cent cinquante—

*Toni* [*Sips*] Ah—

*Theodore* Can't you wait till we all drink together? Now then, children . Before we solemnly drink to our better acquaintance, let us drink to the happy chance that, that and so forth

*Toni* Yes, that's enough [*They drink, FRITZ taking TONI's arm, THEODORE CHRISTINE'S*]

*Fritz* [*Kisses TONI*]

*Theodore* [*Starts to kiss CHRISTINE*]

*Christine* Is that necessary?

*Theodore* Absolutely, else the whole ceremony is null [*Kisses her*] There, and now to your seats!

*Toni* But it's getting terribly hot in the room

*Fritz* That's because of all the candles Theodore lit

*Toni* And the wine, too [*She leans back in her chair*]

*Theodore* Come here, the best of all is coming now [*He cuts off a slice of the cake and puts it in her mouth*] There, sweet tooth,—that good?

*Toni* Awfully! [*He gives her another*]

*Theodore* Come, Fritz, now's the time Now you might play something

*Fritz* Do you want me to, Christine?

*Christine* Please do!

*Toni* Play something swell

*Theodore* [*Fills the glasses*]

*Toni* No more [*Drinks*]

*Christine*. [*Sipping*] The wine is so heavy

*Theodore* [*Pointing to the glass*] Fritz

*Fritz* [*Empties the glass, goes to piano*]

*Christine* [*Goes and sits by him*]

*Toni* Mr Fritz, play the "Double Eagle"

*Fritz* The "Double Eagle"—how does it go?

*Tom* Dore, can't you play it?

*Theodore* I can't play at all

*Fritz*. I know the thing, but I can't think of it

*Toni* I'll sing it for you.... La . la lalalala

*Fritz* Aha, now I know. [*Does not play quite correctly*]

*Toni* [*Goes to the piano*] No, this way [*Plays the melody with one finger*]

*Fritz* Yes, yes . [*He plays, TONI sings*]

*Theodore* Recollections again, hey?

*Fritz* [*Plays wrong again and stops*] Can't do it I've got no ear. [*He starts to improvise*]

*Toni* [*After the first measure*] That's no good

*Fritz* [*Laughs*] Don't say that, I made it up

*Tom* But it's no good for dancing

*Fritz* Just try it once . . .

*Theodore* [*To TONI*] Come, let's try [*They dance*]

*Christine* [*Sits by the piano and looks at the keys*]

[*There is a ring*]

*Fritz* [*Suddenly stops playing, THEODORE and TONI dance on*]

*Theodore and Toni* [*Together*] What's all this? Come!

*Fritz* The bell just rang . . . [*To THEODORE*] Did you invite anybody else?

*Theodore* I should say not—you don't need to answer the bell

*Christine* [*To FRITZ*] What's the matter with you?

*Fritz* Nothing . . .

[*There is another ring*]

*Fritz* [*Stands up, rooted to the spot*]

*Theodore* You are simply not at home.

*Fritz* You can hear the piano out in the corridor . And you can see from the street that the room is lit

*Theodore* What folly is this? You're simply not at home

*Fritz* But it makes me nervous

*Theodore* Well, what do you suppose it's going to be? A letter—or a telegram—You're not going to have a visitor at [*Looks at his watch*] nine o'clock

[*There is another ring*]

*Fritz* Rubbish, I must go and see—  
[*Exit*]

Tom But you're not a bit swell—  
[Strikes a few keys on the piano]

Theodore Here, stop that now!—[To CHRISTINE] What ails you? Does the bell make you nervous too?

Fritz [Returns, in forced calm]

Theodore and Christine [Together] Well, who was it?—Who was it?

Fritz [With a forced smile] You must be good enough to excuse me for a moment Go in there meanwhile

Theodore What is it?

Christine Who is it?

Fritz Nothing, child, I simply have to say a few words to a gentleman

[FRITZ has opened the door of the adjoining room, conducts the girls into it THEODORE, going in last, looks questioningly at FRITZ]

Fritz [In a low voice, with an expression of horror] He!

Theodore Ah!

Fritz In with you!

Theodore I beg of you, don't do anything stupid, it may be a trap

Fritz Go go [THEODORE exit] FRITZ goes rapidly through the room to the corridor, so that the stage is empty for a few seconds Then he enters again, allowing an elegantly dressed gentleman of about thirty-five years to precede him THE GENTLEMAN wears a yellow mantle, holds his hat in his gloved hand While entering] Pardon me for making you wait . . . I beg you

The Gentleman [In a very easy tone] Oh, that is nothing I regret extremely to have disturbed you

Fritz By no means Will you not [Indicates a chair]

The Gentleman Why, I see that I have disturbed you? A little entertainment, I presume?

Fritz A few friends

The Gentleman [Seating himself, amicable] A masquerade, no doubt?

Fritz [Embarrassed] Why do you say that?

The Gentleman Well, your friends have ladies' hats and cloaks

Fritz Well yes [Smiling] There may be lady friends among them [Silence]

The Gentleman Life is at times very merry yes [Looks rigidly at FRITZ]

Fritz [Endures the glance a while, then looks away] I presume I may permit myself to inquire what gives me the pleasure of your visit?

The Gentleman Certainly [Calmly] You see, my wife forgot to take her veil away from here

Fritz Your wife here? Her . . . [Smiling] The jest is a trifle strange

The Gentleman [Suddenly rising, very loudly, almost wildly, supporting himself by resting one hand on the chair arm] She did forget it

Fritz [Rises also, and the two men stand facing each other]

The Gentleman [Raises his clenched fist as if to launch it at FRITZ, in fury and loathing] Oh!

Fritz [Makes a parrying motion, takes a short step backward]

The Gentleman [After a long pause] Here are your letters [He throws on the desk a packet of letters which he has taken from his overcoat pocket] I wish those which you have received

Fritz [Parrying motion]

The Gentleman [Vehemently, significantly] I do not wish to have them found—later—in your rooms

Fritz [Very loudly] They will not be found

The Gentleman [Looks at him Pause]

Fritz What else do you wish of me?

The Gentleman [Scornfully] What else?

Fritz I am at your disposal

The Gentleman [Bows coolly] Very well [He casts a glance around the room, as he again sees the table and the girls' hats, a sudden flash crosses his face, as if he would burst into a new fit of rage]

Fritz [Notices this] I am wholly at your disposal—I shall be at home to-morrow till noon

The Gentleman [Bows and turns to go]

Fritz [Accompanies him to the door, THE GENTLEMAN motioning him away When he is gone, FRITZ goes to the desk and stands there a moment Then he hastens to the window, looks through a crack in the blind, and can be seen to follow the motions of the gentleman passing along the street Leaving the window he looks down for a moment, then goes to the door of the adjoining room, opens it halfway, and calls] Theodore, one moment

*[The following scene very rapid]*

Theodore *[Excited]* Well? . . .

Fritz He knows

Theodore He knows nothing You simply fell into his trap I'll wager you even confessed. You're a fool, I tell you . . . You

Fritz *[Pointing to the letters]* He brought me back my letters.

Theodore *[Startled]* Oh! . . . *[After a pause]* I always say, a man ought not to write letters

Fritz It was he, this noon, down below

Theodore Well, what happened?—Tell me about it

Fritz You must do me a great service now, Theodore

Theodore I'll fix up the whole business for you

Fritz That is out of the question now.

Theodore Then . . .

Fritz In any case it will be well . . . *[Breaks off]*—But we can't let the poor girls wait so long

Theodore Let them wait What were you going to say?

Fritz It will be well if you go to Lensky to-day

Theodore At once, if you wish

Fritz You won't find him now but between eleven and twelve he will surely come into the coffee-house . . . perhaps the two of you will then come here

Theodore Come, don't make up such a face . . . ninety-nine times out of a hundred it turns out all right . . .

Fritz He will see to it that this one doesn't turn out all right

Theodore But I beg you, remember that affair of last year, between Doctor Billinger and Herz—that was exactly the same

Fritz None of that! You know yourself he ought to have shot me down right here in the room—it would have come to the same thing

Theodore *[Acting]* Well, that is fine, I must say That's a grand idea And so Lensky and I count for nothing? You think we'll agree that . . .

Fritz I beg of you, no more of that!

You simply accept what is proposed

Theodore Ah,—

Fritz What's the sense of all this, Theodore? As if you didn't know

Theodore Nonsense And anyway, it's

all a matter of luck . . . You have just as much chance of . . .

Fritz *[Without listening to him]* She foreboded it We both foreboded it We knew it

Theodore Come, Fritz . . .

Fritz *[Goes to the desk, locks up the letters]* Oh, what is she doing this minute? Did he . . . Theodore, you must find out to-morrow what happened over there.

Theodore I will try

Fritz And see to it that no useless delay . . .

Theodore It can scarcely be before day after to-morrow in the morning

Fritz *[Almost horrified]* Theodore!

Theodore And so . . . head up—You believe a little in inward conviction, don't you—and I have a firm conviction that everything will turn out all right *[With forced merriment]* I don't know why myself, but I have the conviction, anyway!

Fritz *[Smiling]* What a good fellow you are But what shall we say to the girls?

Theodore That doesn't matter Let's simply send them away

Fritz No, no Let's be as merry as we can Christine must not suspect anything I'll sit down at the piano again, and you call them in *[THEODORE turns to do this, with discontented face]* And what shall you say to them?

Theodore That it's none of their business

Fritz *[Who has sat down at the piano, turning toward him]* No, no—

Theodore That it's about a friend—I'll invent something

Fritz *[Plays a few notes]*

Theodore Ladies, I beg you to enter. *[Has opened the door]*

Toni Well, at last! Has he gone?

Christine *[Hastening to FRITZ]* Who was here, Fritz?

Fritz *[At the piano, playing]* Curious again

Christine I beg you, Fritz, tell me

Fritz Sweetheart, I can't tell you, it really concerns people that you don't know at all

Christine *[Coaxingly.]* Come, Fritz, tell me the truth

Theodore Of course she won't leave you in peace But mind you tell her nothing! You promised him

*Toni* Come, don't be so tiresome, Christine, let them have their fun They're simply putting on airs

*Theodore* I must finish that waltz with Miss Toni [*German accent*] Bleaze, Mister Music-maker—a liddle museek

*Fritz* [*Plays*]

[*THEODORE and TONI dance a few measures*]

*Toni* [*After a few moments*] I can't [*She falls back into a chair*]

*Theodore* [*Kisses her, seats himself beside her on the chair-arm*]

*Fritz* [*Stays at the piano, takes both CHRISTINE's hands, looks at her*]

*Christine* [*As if awakening*] Why don't you play on?

*Fritz* [*Smiling*] Enough for to-day

*Christine* That's the way I'd like to be able to play

*Fritz* Do you play much?

*Christine* I don't get much chance, there's always something in the house that needs to be done And then you know we have such a poor piano

*Fritz* I'd like to try it once I'd like to see your room once, anyway

*Christine* [*Smiling*] It isn't as pretty as here

*Fritz* And something else I'd like to have you tell me about yourself a whole lot I really know so little about you

*Christine* There isn't much to tell—And I haven't any secrets either like some others

*Fritz* You never loved any man before?

*Christine* [*Merely looks at him*]

*Fritz* [*Kisses her hands*]

*Christine* And never shall love any other

*Fritz* [*With an almost pained expression*] Don't say that don't What do you know about it? Does your father love you very much, Christine?

*Christine* Oh, how much! And there was a time when I used to tell him everything

*Fritz* Well, child, don't reproach yourself People have to have secrets once in a while—that's the way of the world

*Christine* If I only knew that you loved me—it would all be right

*Fritz* Then don't you know?

*Christine* If you would always talk to me like that then

*Fritz* Christine! You haven't a very comfortable seat, though

*Christine* Let me be—this is all right [*She lays her head against the piano*]

*Fritz* [*Stands up and strokes her hair*]

*Christine* Oh, that feels good [*The room is quiet*]

*Theodore* Where are the cigars, Fritz?

*Fritz* [*Advances to him as he stands by the sideboard looking*]

*Toni* [*Has fallen asleep*]

*Fritz* [*Hands him a small box of cigars*] And black coffee [*He pours two cups*]

*Theodore* Children, don't you want some coffee, too?

*Fritz* Toni, shall I pour a cup?

*Theodore* Let them sleep—You ought not to drink coffee to-day You ought to go to bed as soon as possible and try to sleep well

*Fritz* [*Looks at him and laughs bitterly*]

*Theodore* Well, things are as they are and now it's not a question of being magnificent or deep, but of being as sensible as you can that's the point in such cases

*Fritz* You'll bring Lensky to me to-night, will you?

*Theodore* That's nonsense To-morrow is time enough

*Fritz* I beg you, bring him

*Theodore* All right, then

*Fritz* Will you take the girls home?

*Theodore* Yes, and right away, too—Toni! Get up!

*Toni* Oh, you're drinking black coffee Give me some, too

*Theodore* Here you are, child

*Fritz* [*To CHRISTINE, going to her*] Tired, my sweetheart?

*Christine* How sweet, when you talk that way

*Fritz* Very tired?

*Christine* [*Smiling*] It's the wine—And I have a little headache, too

*Fritz* Well, that will pass off in the open air

*Christine* Are we going now? - Will you go with us?

*Fritz* No, child I'm going to stay right here I have some things to do

*Christine* [*Recollecting*] Now What have you got to do now?

*Fritz* [*Almost sternly*] Christine, that's

something you must stop—[*Gently*] You see, I'm all used up . . . we walked around in the country for two hours to-day, Theodore and I

Theodore Oh, that was delightful One of these days we'll all drive out into the country together

Tom Yes, that will be swell And you'll put on your uniform

Theodore There's feeling for nature!

Christine When shall I see you again?

Fritz [*Somewhat nervously*] I'll write you

Christine. [*Sadly*] Good-bye [*Turns to go*]

Fritz [*Notices her sadness*] To-morrow, Christine

Christine [*Happily*] Truly?

Fritz In the public gardens out there—at—say at six o'clock . . . Will that suit you?

Christine [*Nods*]

Tom [*To Fritz*] Are you going with us, Fritz?

Fritz No, I shall stay here

Tom He has an easy time of it Think of the long journey home we have

Fritz But Toni, you have left almost the whole of that cake Wait, I'll wrap it up for you, shall I?

Tom [*To Theodore*] Is that proper?

Fritz [*Wraps up the cake*]

Christine She's like a little child

Tom [*To Fritz*] Wait, I'll help you put out the candles [*Puts out one after another*] The candle on the desk is left burning

Christine Shan't I open the window for you? The air is so heavy [*She opens the window, looks at the house opposite*]

Fritz There, children Now I'll light you down the stairs

Tom Are the lights out on the stairs?

Theodore Why, of course

Christine Oh, the air is nice, coming in here

Toni May breezes . . . [*At the door to Fritz, who holds the candlestick*] Well, we thank you for a warm welcome

Theodore [*Urging her forward*] Come, come, come

Fritz [*Goes out with them The door stays open The voices are heard outside The outer door is heard to open*]

Tom Bah!

Theodore Look out for the steps there  
Tom Thanks for the cake

Theodore Shh, you'll wake people up.

Christine Good night

Theodore Good night

[*Fritz can be heard to close and bolt the outer door As he enters and puts the light on the desk, the street-door is heard to open and close*]

Fritz [*Goes to the window and bows, looking down*]

Christine Good night

Tom [*In high spirits*] Good night, my darling child

Theodore [*Reprovingly*] Tom! [*One can hear his words, her laughter, the steps die away THEODORE whistles the melody of the "Double Eagle," which is the last thing heard FRITZ looks out a few moments longer, then sinks down on the chair nearest the window*]

## ACT TWO

CHRISTINE'S room Modest and neat.

Christine [*Is dressing to go out*]

Catherine [*Enters after knocking*] Good evening, Miss Christine

Christine [*Standing before the mirror, turns around*] Good evening

Catherine You're just going out?

Christine I'm not in such a great hurry.

Catherine My husband sent me to ask if you wouldn't go and take supper with us in the Zoological Garden, there's a band there to-night

Christine Thank you very much, Mrs Binder I can't to-night Another time, perhaps?—But you're not angry?

Catherine Not a bit, why should I be? You'll probably have a better time than with us

Christine [*Looks at her*]

Catherine Has your father gone to the theatre?

Christine Oh, no, he comes home first. It doesn't begin till half past seven now

Catherine That's so, I keep forgetting I'll just wait for him I've wanted for a long time to ask him about free tickets to the new piece I suppose they can be had now?

Christine. Surely, nobody goes there any more now, when the evenings are so lovely.

*Catherine* People like us never get a chance to go, unless we happen to know somebody in a theatre—But don't let me keep you, Miss Christine, if you have to go. To be sure, my husband will be very sorry and somebody else too.

*Christine* Who?

*Catherine* Binder's cousin goes with us, of course. Do you know, Miss Christine, that he has a steady job now?

*Christine* [Indifferently] Oh.

*Catherine* And a very nice salary. And such a fine young fellow. And he has such respect for you—

*Christine* Well—good-bye, Mrs. Binder.

*Catherine* A body could tell him anything about you—he wouldn't believe a word of it.

*Christine* [Looks at her]

*Catherine* There are such men.

*Christine* Good-bye, Mrs. Binder.

*Catherine* Good-bye. [Not too maliciously] See that you aren't late to your appointment, Miss Christine.

*Christine* What do you want of me, anyway?

*Catherine* Why, nothing, you're quite right. You can't be young but once.

*Christine* Good-bye.

*Catherine* But I'd like to give you one piece of advice, just the same, Miss Christine. You ought to be a little more careful.

*Christine* Why, what do you mean?

*Catherine* Look,—Vienna is such a big city. Do you have to have your meetings a hundred paces from your house?

*Christine* I suppose that's nobody's business.

*Catherine* I didn't want to believe it, when Binder told me. He saw you, you know. Come, I said to him, you were mistaken, you saw somebody else. Miss Christine is not the girl to go walking with elegant young gentlemen in the evening, and if she did, she would be wise enough not to go walking through these streets. Well, says he, you can ask her yourself. And, says he, it's no wonder, either—she doesn't come to see us any more at all. Instead of that she's going around all the time with Toni Schlager, and what sort of company is that for a decent young girl?—You see, men are so low-minded, Miss Christine. —And of course he had to go and tell everything to Franz right away too, but he got

fine and angry, he did, and for Miss Christine he'd burn his hand off, and anybody that said anything about her would have to deal with him. And you're so domestic and were always so sweet with your old auntie—God grant her eternal rest—and you live so modestly and so retiringly and all that. [Pause] Perhaps you'll come to hear the music, after all?

*Christine* No.

*Vyring* [Enters, a laurel branch in his hand] Good evening—Ah, Mrs. Binder. How are you?

*Catherine* Thank you, well.

*Vyring* And little Lena? And your husband?

*Catherine* All well, God be praised.

*Vyring* Well, that's fine. [To Christine] You're still at home in all this fine weather?

*Christine* I was just going out.

*Vyring* That's right. The air outside,—it's something wonderful, eh, Mrs. Binder? I just came through the public gardens, the lilacs are in bloom, simply gorgeous. I broke the law a little, too. [Gives the branch to Christine]

*Christine* Thank you, father.

*Catherine* Thank your lucky stars that the guard didn't catch you.

*Vyring* Just go out there once, Mrs. Binder. It smells just as good as if I hadn't plucked the little twig.

*Catherine* But if everybody thought the same—

*Vyring* Well, that would be a mistake, to be sure.

*Christine* Good-bye, father.

*Vyring* If you could wait a few minutes, you might go to the theatre with me.

*Christine* I. I promised Toni that I would go for her.

*Vyring* Oh, yes. Well, that's wiser, too. Youth belongs with youth. Good-bye, Christine.

*Christine* [Kisses him] Good-bye, Mrs. Binder. [Exit VYRING's eyes follow her tenderly]

*Catherine* That's a very close friendship with her and Miss Toni.

*Vyring* Yes—I'm really glad that she has such company and doesn't have to sit at home all the time. What sort of a life does that girl have, anyway?

*Catherine* Yes, to be sure.

*Vyring* I can't tell you, Mrs Binder, how it hurts me sometimes when I come home from rehearsal and find her sitting there and sewing, and then we've scarcely got up from the table at noon when she sits down again and goes to copying notes

*Catherine* Yes, yes, the millionaires have an easier time of it, to be sure, than we do. But how about her singing?

*Vyring* It's not much Her voice is big enough for a room, and her singing is good enough for her father—but you can't live on that

*Catherine.* That's too bad

*Vyring* I am glad she sees it herself She at least will be spared from disappointments Of course I could get her into the chorus in our theatre

*Catherine* Of course, with such a figure!

*Vyring* But there's no future there

*Catherine* A girl brings really a good many cares When I think that in five or six years my little Lena will be a grown girl too—

*Vyring* But why don't you sit down, Mrs Binder?

*Catherine* Oh, thanks; my husband is coming for me right away—I only came to invite Christine

*Vyring* Invite? . . .

*Catherine* Yes, to hear the band in the Zoological Gardens I thought that might cheer her up a bit She really needs it

*Vyring* Couldn't do her a bit of harm, especially after this sad winter Why doesn't she go with you?

*Catherine* I don't know . . Perhaps because Binder's cousin is with us

*Vyring* Ah, that's possible You know she can't stand him She told me that herself

*Catherine* Well, why not? Franz is a very decent fellow—and now he's even got a steady job, and that's a piece of good fortune nowadays for a . . .

*Vyring* For a . . . poor girl—

*Catherine* For any girl

*Vyring* Now, tell me, Mrs Binder, is a blooming young creature like that really made for nothing but for some such decent fellow who happens to have a steady job?

*Catherine* Why, that's the best thing, after all You can't wait for a count, and when one happens to come along, he usually takes his leave before he's married you

[*VYRING is at the window Pause*] Well, and that's why I always say you can't be careful enough of a young girl, especially of the company she keeps—

*Vyring* Well, I wonder if it's worth while to throw away all your young years like that—And what good does all her goodness do a poor creature like that, even if, after years of waiting, the stocking-maker actually comes?

*Catherine* Mr Vyring, if my husband is a stocking-maker, he is an honest and good man, that I've never had to complain of .

*Vyring* [*Soothingly*] Why, Mrs Binder, do you think I'm aiming at you? . . . You didn't fling your youth out of the window, either

*Catherine* I have forgotten all about that

*Vyring* Don't say that—You can say what you like, memories are, after all, the best thing in your life

*Catherine* I haven't any memories.

*Vyring* Now, now . . .

*Catherine* And if a body does have such memories as you mean, what remains behind? . . . Regret

*Vyring* Well, and what remains behind—if she—doesn't even have anything to remember? If her whole life simply goes by [*Simply and without emotion*], day after day, without happiness or love—I suppose you think that's better?

*Catherine* But, Mr Vyring, just think of the old lady, of your sister . . . But it still pains you to have her spoken of, Mr Vyring

*Vyring* It still pains me, yes

*Catherine* Of course . . . when two people have clung to each other so warmly.

I always said that brothers like you aren't found every day

*Vyring* [*Makes a gesture of deprecation*]

*Catherine* Well, it's true You had to be both father and mother to her, and such a young man

*Vyring* Yes, yes—

*Catherine* And that must be a kind of consolation, too Then you know that you have been the benefactor and the protector of a poor girl like that—

*Vyring* Yes, I imagined that, too—when she was still a pretty young girl—and God knows how clever and noble I thought my—



self But then, later on, when the gray hairs came and the wrinkles, and one day passed like all the others—and her whole youth—and the girl gradually (you scarcely notice such things) turned into the old maid—then for the first time I began to see what I had done

*Catherine* But Mr Vyring—

*Vyring* I still see her before me, as she often used to sit opposite me in the evening, sitting by the lamp here in the room, and used to look at me with her quiet smile, with a certain resigned expression,—as if she wanted to thank me for something,—and I—I could have gladly gone down on my knees to her, and begged her forgiveness that I had guarded her so well against all dangers—and all happiness! [Pause]

*Catherine* And many a girl would be happy just the same, if she always had such a brother by her side and nothing to regret

*Tom* [Enters] Good evening Why, it's all dark here, you can scarcely see a thing—Ah, Mrs Binder Your husband is down-stairs waiting for you, Mrs Binder. Isn't Christine at home?

*Vyring* She went out a quarter of an hour ago

*Catherine* Didn't you meet her? She was going to meet you

*Tom* No . we evidently missed each other—You're going to hear the band to-night, your husband says

*Catherine* Yes, he is so fond of it What a charming little hat you have on, Miss Tom Isn't it a new one?

*Tom* I should say not—Don't you know this style any more? Last spring's style, only freshly trimmed

*Catherine* Did you trim it yourself?

*Tom* Well, of course

*Vyring* So clever!

*Catherine* Oh, yes—I keep forgetting that you worked for a year in a milliner shop

*Tom* I shall probably go back again Mother wants me to, and that settles it

*Catherine* How is your mother?

*Tom* Well enough—she has a little toothache—but the doctor says it's rheumatic pains

*Vyring* Well, it's time for me

*Catherine* I'll go right down with you, Mr Vyring

*Tom* I'll go, too But take your over-

coat, Mr Vyring, it's going to be quite cool later on

*Vyring* You think so?

*Catherine* Yes, indeed—How can you be so foolish?

*Christine* [Enters]

*Tom* Why, there she is

*Catherine* Back from your walk already?

*Christine* Yes, Hello, Tom,—I have a headache [Seats herself]

*Vyring* Headache?

*Catherine* That's from the air

*Vyring* Come, what's the matter, Christine?—Please, Miss Tom, will you light the lamp?

*Tom* [Sets about it]

*Christine* But I can do that myself

*Vyring* Let me see your face, Christine.

*Christine* But, father, it is nothing, it's just the air outside

*Catherine* Lots of people can't stand the spring air

*Vyring* Miss Tom, you'll stay with Christine, won't you?

*Tom* Of course I will

*Christine* But it isn't anything, father

*Tom* My mother doesn't make such a fuss over me, when I have a headache

*Vyring* [To CHRISTINE, still sitting] Are you so tired?

*Christine* [Standing up] I'll get right up again [Smiling]

*Vyring* There—now you look quite different again [To CATHERINE] She looks quite different when she smiles, don't you think? Well, good-bye Christine [Kisses her] And see to it that your little head isn't aching when I come home [He is at the door]

*Catherine* [Softly to CHRISTINE.] Have you quarreled?

*Christine* [Makes an angry gesture]

*Vyring* [At the door] Mrs Binder!

*Tom* Good-bye

[Exit VYRING and CATHERINE]

*Tom* Do you know what your headache comes from? From the sweet wine yesterday I'm surprised that I don't feel the effects of it But it was jolly, wasn't it?

*Christine* [Nods]

*Tom* They're swell people, aren't they?—both of them, you can't say anything different, can you?—And such nice rooms as Fritz has, really splendid At Dore's place [Interrupts herself] Oh, well—Say



have you still got such a headache? Why don't you talk? . . . What's the matter with you?

*Christine* Only think,—he didn't come.

*Toni* Left you in the lurch, did he? Serves you right

*Christine* Why, what do you mean? What have I done?

*Toni* You spoil him, that's all; you're too nice to him. A man just can't help getting tyrannical

*Christine* You don't know what you're talking about

*Toni*. I do know quite well—I've been angry with you this long time. He comes late to his appointments, he doesn't take you home, he goes into a theatre-box with strangers, he leaves you in the lurch—and you take it all calmly and make sheep's eyes [imitating] at him into the bargain

*Christine* Oh, don't talk so, don't make yourself out worse than you are. You love Theodore too

*Toni* Love him—of course I love him. But he won't find me grieving about him, and no man will, not any more. There isn't one of these men that is worth it

*Christine* I never heard you talk so, never!

*Toni* No. Tina—we never talked like this before. I never dared, you see. You don't know how afraid of you I was! . . . But I always thought this when you once get it, you'll get it bad. And the first time it certainly does give you a shaking up—But you can be thankful that you've got such a good friend to help you through your first love affair

*Christine* Toni!

*Toni* Don't you believe me when I say I'm a good friend to you? If I wasn't here to tell you that he's just a man like the rest, and that the whole manpack isn't worth a single bad hour, God knows what thoughts might come into your head. But I always will say, you never can believe a word men say

*Christine* What do you mean by saying men, men—what do I care about men!—I'm not asking about the others—As long as I live I shall never think about another man

*Toni* Well, what are you thinking of? . . . has he? . . . Of course—such things

have happened, but then you ought to have gone at the affair differently.

*Christine* Do keep still!

*Toni* Well, what do you want? I can't help it if it's so—You have to think about a thing like that. You simply have to wait till somebody comes that you can see is in earnest from his face . . .

*Christine* Toni, I can't stand such words to-day, they hurt me

*Toni* [Good-humoredly] Oh, now, come—

*Christine* Leave me alone . . . don't be angry . . . leave me alone!

*Toni* Why should I be angry? I'll go. I didn't want to hurt you, Christine, truly not. [Turns to go] Ah, Mr Fritz

*Fritz* [Has entered] Good evening

*Christine* [With a joyous cry] Fritz! Fritz! [Rushes into his arms]

*Toni* [Steals out, her face saying. I'm not needed here]

*Fritz* [Freeing himself] But—

*Christine* They all say you will forsake me! But you won't, will you—not yet—not just yet?

*Fritz* Who says it? What ails you? [Patting her] But, sweetheart, . . . I really thought you would be startled when I suddenly came walking in here

*Christine* Oh—so long as I have you!

*Fritz* Come, calm yourself—did you wait long for me?

*Christine* Why didn't you come?

*Fritz* I was detained and that made me late. Just now I was in the gardens and didn't find you—and was going home again. Suddenly I had such a longing, such a longing for your dear little face

*Christine* [Happily] Oh, truly?

*Fritz* And then, too, I had such an indescribable desire to see where you live—yes, really—I just had to see it once. And so I couldn't stand it and came up here . . . and so you really don't mind?

*Christine* Oh, the idea!

*Fritz* Nobody saw me; and I knew your father was in the theatre

*Christine* What do I care about people!

*Fritz* So this is—[Looks around the room]—this is your room? Very pretty

*Christine* You can't see anything [Is about to take the shade off the lamp]

*Fritz* No, don't do that, the light blinds me, it's better this way. So that's the win-

dow you've told me about, where you always sit and work, eh?—And the pretty view! [*Smiling*] But just look at all the roofs you see—And over there—what's that black thing I see over yonder?

*Christine* That's Bald Mountain

*Fritz* Sure enough You really have a better view than I

*Christine* Oh!

*Fritz* I'd like to live up so high, and be able to overlook all the roofs, I think that is very nice And I suppose the alley is quiet?

*Christine* Oh, in the daytime there's noise enough

*Fritz* Do any teams go past?

*Christine* Not often, but there's a locksmith in the house opposite

*Fritz* Oh, that's very unpleasant [*He has sat down*]

*Christine* You get used to it, you don't hear it any more

*Fritz* [*Rises again hastily*] Is this really my first visit? Everything seems so familiar to me . I have imagined everything just this way [*He starts to look around the room*]

*Christine* No, you mustn't look at anything

*Fritz* What are those pictures?

*Christine* Oh, stop!

*Fritz* Ah, I want to look at them [*He takes the lamp and lights the pictures*]

*Christine* "Parting and Return"

*Fritz* Sure enough—"Parting and Return"

*Christine* I know well enough that the pictures aren't pretty—There is a much better one in father's room

*Fritz* What picture is it?

*Christine* It is a girl looking out of the window, and outside it's winter, you know—and its name is "Forsaken"

*Fritz* Oh—[*Puts down the lamp*] Ah, and that's your library [*Sits down beside the little book-rack*]

*Christine* You'd better not look at them

*Fritz* Why not? Ah! Schiller

Hauff Pocket Encyclopedia Goodness gracious!

*Christine* It only goes to G.

*Fritz* [*Smiling*] Oh A book for old and young You look at the pictures in it, I suppose?

*Christine*. Of course I've looked at the pictures

*Fritz* [*Still seated*] Who is the gentleman there on the stove?

*Christine* Why, don't you know? That's Schubert

*Fritz* [*Rising*] Sure enough

*Christine* Because father likes him so much Father used to compose songs himself, very beautiful ones

*Fritz* And now he doesn't?

*Christine* Not any more [*Pause*]

*Fritz* [*Sits down*] How cosy it is here

*Christine* Do you really like it?

*Fritz* Very much What is that? [*Takes up a vase of artificial flowers standing on the table*]

*Christine* He's found something else!

*Fritz* No, child, that doesn't belong in here It looks so dusty

*Christine* But they certainly aren't dusty

*Fritz* Artificial flowers always look dusty

Real flowers ought to be in your room, flowers that are fresh and sweet-smelling From now I shall [*Breaks off, turns to conceal his emotion*]

*Christine* What? What were you going to say?

*Fritz* Nothing, nothing

*Christine* [*Rises Tenderly*] What was it?

*Fritz* I was going to say that I would send you fresh flowers to-morrow

*Christine* Well, and did you want to take it back so soon?—Of course! To-morrow you won't be thinking of me any more

*Fritz* [*Deprecatory gesture*]

*Christine* Certainly, it's out of sight, out of mind, with you

*Fritz* What are you saying?

*Christine* Oh, yes, I know I can tell

*Fritz* How can you imagine such a thing?

*Christine* You are to blame yourself Because you're always keeping secrets from me Because you never tell me about yourself—What do you do all day?

*Fritz* Why, sweetheart, that's very simple I go to lectures—sometimes—then I go into the coffeehouse then I read or sometimes I play the piano—then I chat with somebody—then I go calling . but all that is of no account It's tiresome to talk about it—But now I must go, child

*Christine* So soon—

*Fritz* Your father will soon be here

*Christine* Not for a long time yet, Fritz.  
—Stay awhile—just a minute—stay awhile

*Fritz* And then I have Theodore is expecting me . . . I have something to talk over with him

*Christine* To-day?

*Fritz* Surely to-day.

*Christine* You can see him to-morrow, too

*Fritz* Perhaps I shan't be in Vienna to-morrow

*Christine* Not in Vienna?

*Fritz* [*Noticing her alarm, calmly, cheerfully*] Well, that wouldn't be anything wonderful, would it? I'm going away for a day—or perhaps for two, you child, you

*Christine* Where to?

*Fritz* Where? . . . Oh, anywhere—Good heavens, don't make up such a face . . . I'm going out to my father's estate . . . Well, is that so terrible to you?

*Christine*. And you never tell me about him, either

*Fritz* No, what a child you are . . . You don't understand how nice it is to be all alone together Tell me, don't you feel that?

*Christine* No, it isn't nice at all that you never tell me anything about yourself

You see, I'm interested in everything that touches you, . . . yes, everything—I'd like to have more of you than just the one hour in the evening that we can spend together sometimes Then you are gone again, and I don't know anything Then the whole night goes and a whole day, with so many hours in it—and still I don't know anything And that often makes me so sad.

*Fritz* Why does that make you sad?

*Christine* Why, because I have such a longing for you as if you weren't in the same city at all, as if you were somewhere else You simply disappear, as far as I am concerned, so far away

*Fritz* [*Somewhat impatient*] But—

*Christine* Well, it's true!

*Fritz* Come here to me [*She does so*] After all, the only thing you know is that I—that you love me at this moment . . . [*She wishes to speak*] Don't talk about eternity [*More to himself*] Perhaps there are moments that scatter around them the aroma of eternity—That is the only one that we can understand, the only one that belongs to us [*He kisses her Pause He*

*rises. With a sudden outburst*] Oh, how beautiful it is here, how beautiful! [*He stands at the window*] So far from the world you are in here, among all the many houses . . . I seem to be so alone here, just with you . . . [*Softly*] So sheltered

*Christine* If you always talked like that . . . I could almost believe . . .

*Fritz* Believe what, child?

*Christine* That you loved me as I dreamed it—the day you kissed me the first time, . . . do you remember?

*Fritz* [*Passionately*] I do love you!—  
[*He embraces her, tears himself from her*] But now let me go

*Christine* Are you sorry you said it, so soon again? You are free, you know you are free—you can go and leave me whenever you like . . . you haven't promised me anything—and I haven't demanded anything of you . . . It doesn't matter what becomes of me, then I've been happy for once, and that's all I ask of life I only want you to know that and to believe that I never-loved any man before you, and that I never shall love any man—when you get tired of me—

*Fritz* [*More to himself*] Don't say it, don't say it—it sounds—so sweet

[*There is a knock*]

*Fritz* [*Starts*] That's probably Theodore

*Christine* [*Startled*] He knows that you are here?

*Theodore* [*Enters*] Good evening—Impudent of me, eh?

*Christine* Do you have such important matters to discuss with him?

*Theodore* I certainly have, and have been looking everywhere for him

*Fritz* [*In a low voice*] Why didn't you wait below?

*Christine* What are you whispering to him?

*Theodore* [*Wishing her to hear*] Why I didn't wait below Well, if I had absolutely known that you were here But I couldn't risk walking up and down outside for two hours

*Fritz* [*Pointedly*] Then you will go with me to-morrow?

*Theodore* [*Comprehending*] Surely

*Fritz* That's right

*Theodore* But I've been hurrying so that

I must beg permission to sit down for a few seconds

*Christine* Please do [*Buries herself at the window*]

*Fritz* [*Softly*] Anything new?—Did you find out about her?

*Theodore* No I merely came to get you because you are so incautious What's the use of these unnecessary excitements? You ought to try to sleep It's rest you need [*CHRISTINE is near them again*]

*Fritz* Tell me, isn't this a dear little room?

*Theodore* Yes, it is very nice [*To CHRISTINE*] Do you stay here at home all day long?—Really, it is very homelike here A little high up for my taste

*Fritz* That's just what I like about it

*Theodore* But now I'm going to take Fritz away from you, we've got to get up early in the morning

*Christine* Then you are really going away?

*Theodore* He will come again, Miss Christine

*Christine* Will you write to me?

*Theodore* But if he comes back to-morrow—

*Christine* Oh, I know he's going to stay longer than that

*Fritz* [*Starts*]

*Theodore* [*Notices it*] Well, does he have to write immediately? I wouldn't have thought you so sentimental . Well, kiss each other good-bye, since it'll be so long [*Breaks off*] I'm simply not here

[*Fritz and CHRISTINE kiss*]

*Theodore* [*Takes out a cigarette-case and puts a cigarette in his mouth, seeks vainly for a match*] Tell me, dear Christine, haven't you a match?

*Christine* Oh, yes, there are some [*Points to a holder on the chest of drawers*]

*Theodore* It's empty

*Christine* I'll get you one [*Hurries into adjoining room*]

*Fritz* [*Looking after her*] Oh, God, how such hours lie to us!

*Theodore* Why, what hours?

*Fritz* I'm almost ready to believe that my happiness is here, that this sweet girl—  
[*Breaks off* ]—but this hour is a tremendous bar

*Theodore* Absurd talk How you will laugh at it

*Fritz* I don't think I shall have any time for that

*Christine* [*Returns*] Here you are

*Theodore* Thanks very much Good-bye, then—[*To Fritz*] Well, what do you want now?

*Fritz* [*Looks back and forth around the room, as if to deepen the impression in his mind*] It's hard to leave it

*Christine* Oh, make fun of it if you like

*Theodore* [*Firmly*] Come—Good-bye, Christine

*Fritz* Farewell

*Christine* Till we meet again [*THEODORE and FRITZ exeunt She stands a moment, anxious, then goes to the open door, softly*] Fritz!

*Fritz* [*Comes back again and presses her to his heart*] Farewell

### ACT THREE

*The same scene as the second act It is noon*

*Christine* [*Alone, sitting sewing by the window, lays down her work*]

*Lena* [*Enters*] Good day, Miss Christine

*Christine* [*Very absent-mindedly*] Good day, child, what is it?

*Lena* Mother sent me to see if I could get the theatre tickets

*Christine* Father hasn't got home yet, child, will you wait?

*Lena* No, Miss Christine, then I'll come after lunch again

*Christine* Very well

*Lena* [*Going, turns back*] And mother said to ask Miss Christine if her headache was gone yet

*Christine* Yes, child

*Lena* Good-bye, Miss Christine

*Christine* Good-bye

*Tom* [*Enters just as LENA is going out*]

*Lena* Good day, Miss Tom!

*Tom* Hello, little monkey!

*Lena* [*Exit*]

*Christine* [*Rises to meet TOM*] Then they are back?

*Tom* How should I know?

*Christine* And you haven't any letter, nothing?

Tom No

Christine You have no letter, either?

Tom What should we write to each other?

Christine They've been gone since day before yesterday

Tom Yes, yes, that's not such a long time You needn't make such a fuss on that account I don't understand you and how you look,—your face is all tear-stained Your father will surely notice it when he comes home

Christine [*Simply*] My father knows everything

Tom [*Almost frightened*] What?

Christine I told him

Tom That's another of your bright ideas But of course your face shows everything And does he know who it is?

Christine Yes

Tom And did he scold?

Christine [*Shakes her head*]

Tom What did he say, then?

Christine Nothing . He went away very quietly, as usual

Tom And still it was stupid of you to tell You'll see Do you know why your father said nothing? Because he thinks Fritz will marry you

Christine Why do you speak of that?

Tom Do you know what I think?

Christine Well, what?

Tom That this whole story of a journey is a lie

Christine What?

Tom Perhaps they haven't gone away at all

Christine They have gone—I know they have Yesterday evening I went past his house, the blinds were down, he isn't there

Tom Oh, I believe that They're away all right But they won't come back—at least not to us

Christine [*Anxiously*] Oh—

Tom Well, it's possible

Christine You say that so calmly

Tom Why yes—whether it happens today or tomorrow—or in six months—it comes to the same thing

Christine Oh, you don't know what you are saying You don't know Fritz He isn't like what you think I found that out when he was here in my room the other day Often he only pretends to be indifferent—but he does love me. . . . [*As if she*

*divined Tom's reply*] Yes, yes, not forever, I know that but it can't stop all at once!

Tom Well, I don't know Fritz so well

Christine He will come back, and Theodore will come back too, I am sure of it.

Tom [*Makes a gesture indicating indifference*]

Christine Tom . . do me a favor.

Tom Don't be so excited—what is it you want?

Christine Go to Theodore's, it's right near here . . Ask in the house whether he's got back yet, and if he isn't back, perhaps they'll know when he's coming

Tom I'm not going to run after a man

Christine He doesn't need to find it out. Perhaps you'll happen to meet him It's almost one o'clock now—he'll be just going to lunch

Tom Why don't you go and ask at Fritz's house?

Christine I'm afraid to—he doesn't like that And he is certainly not back yet. But perhaps Theodore is back by now and knows when Fritz is coming Oh, please Tom!

Tom You're so childish sometimes

Christine Do it for me! Go and ask! It won't do any harm

Tom Well, if it means so much to you I'll go But it won't do much good I'm sure they aren't back yet

Christine And you'll come right back, won't you?

Tom Yes, yes, mother can wait lunch a little

Christine I thank you, Tom, you're so good

Tom Of course I'm good—but now you be sensible, won't you? . . Well, so long

Christine Oh, thank you!

Tom [*Exit*]

Christine [*Arranges the room, folds up her sewing, etc Then she goes to window and looks out After a moment VYRING enters without her seeing him at first He is in great excitement, looks anxiously at his daughter*]

Vyring She knows nothing yet, nothing. [*He remains standing in the doorway and does not venture to take a step into the room*]

Christine [*Turns, sees him, starts*]

Vyring [*Tries to smile He steps in*]

Well, Christine [As if calling her to him]

Christine [Goes to him, as if to fall before him]

Vyring [Prevents her] Well what are you thinking of, Christine? We [With a new resolve] We'll just forget it, shall we?

Christine [Raises her head]

Vyring Why yes I—and you!

Christine Father, didn't you understand me this morning?

Vyring Well, what would you have, Christine? I surely must tell you what I think about it, don't you think so? Well, then

Christine Father, what does this mean?

Vyring Come here, my child Listen to me quietly You know I listened quietly to you, when you told me We must—

Christine Oh, I beg you, don't speak to me so, father If you have thought it over, and find that you can't forgive me, then drive me away—but don't speak that way

Vyring Just listen quietly to me, Christine You can still do whatever you will

See, Christine, you are so young Haven't you ever thought [With great hesitation] that the whole thing might be a mistake?

Christine Why do you say that to me, father? I know so well what I have done—and I don't ask anything—not from you and not from anybody in the world, if it has been a mistake I just told you, drive me away, but

Vyring [Interrupting] How can you talk so Even if it was a mistake, is that any reason for getting desperate right away, such a young creature as you are? Just think how beautiful, how wonderful life is Just think how many things there are to give you joy, how much youth and how much happiness still lies before you See, I don't have much of the world any more, and even for me life is still beautiful—and I can still look forward to so many things How we shall be together—how we shall plan our life, you and I—how you will begin to sing again, now that the beautiful days are here—and how we'll take a whole day off, when summer comes, and go out into the green country—Oh, there are so many lovely things so many It is silly

to give up everything, because one must give up his first happiness, or anything that he thought was that

Christine Why [Anxiously] then must I give it up?

Vyring Well, was it happiness? Do you really think, Christine, that you had to tell your father today? I have known it for a long time—and I knew too that you would tell me No, it never was happiness for you Don't I know those eyes? There wouldn't have been tears in them so often, and those cheeks wouldn't have been pale so much, if you had loved a man who was worthy of it

Christine Why, how can you what do you know what have you heard?

Vyring Nothing, nothing at all But you yourself told me what he is A young fellow like that—what does he know? Has he the faintest idea of what falls into his hands—does he know the difference between the true and the false—and all your mad love—did he ever understand that?

Christine [More and more alarmed] You and he . Were you at his house?

Vyring Why, what are you thinking of! He went away, didn't he? But Christine, I still have a head on my shoulders, and my eyes in my head Come, child, forget about it, do! Your future lies in an altogether different place You can, you will still be as happy as you deserve You will find a man some time who will know what a treasure he has in you

Christine [Has hurried to the chest of drawers to get her hat]

Vyring What are you doing?

Christine I'm going out

Vyring Where to?

Christine To him to him

Vyring What are you thinking of?

Christine You're keeping something from me—let me go

Vyring [Holding her firmly] Come to your senses, child He isn't there at all Perhaps he's gone away for a very long time Stay here, what do you want there? Tomorrow or this evening I'll go there with you You can't go out on the street like that do you know how you look?

Christine You will go with me?

Vyring I promise you I will Only stay here now, sit down and come to your senses

again It's enough to make a man laugh, almost, to look at you and all for nothing Can't you stand it here with your father at all any more?

*Christine* What is it you know?

*Vyring* [More and more helpless] What should I know? I know that I love you, that you are my only child, that you must stay with me all the time——

*Christine* Enough—let me go [She wrests herself from him and opens the door, TONI appears in it]

*Toni* [Utters a little cry, as CHRISTINE rushes toward her] Why do you frighten me so?

*Christine* [Steps back, seeing THEODORE behind TONI]

*Theodore* [Remains in the doorway; he is dressed in black]

*Christine* What . . . what is . . . [No answer She looks THEODORE in the face, he cannot meet her eyes] Where is he, where is he? . . . [In the greatest terror No answer, all faces are embarrassed and sad] Where is he? [To THEODORE] Speak, can't you?

*Theodore* [Tries to speak]

*Christine* [Looks at him wide-eyed, looks around her, comprehends the look on their faces, her face shows the dawn of this understanding, she utters a terrible cry] Theodore he is

*Theodore* [Nods]

*Christine* [Seizes her forehead, cannot understand it, she goes to THEODORE, takes him by the arm, as if demented] He is . . . dead? [As if asking herself]

*Vyring* My child——

*Christine* [Thrusting him away] Speak, Theodore, speak!

*Theodore* You know all

*Christine* I know nothing . . . I don't know what has happened . . . do you think . . . I can't hear everything now? how did it happen

Father Theodore . . . [To TONI] You know it too

*Theodore* An unfortunate accident

*Christine* What, what?

*Theodore* He fell

*Christine* What does that mean he . . .

*Theodore* He fell in a duel

*Christine* [Shrieks She is about to fall, VYRING sustains her, motions to THEODORE to go She notes it and seizes him.] Stay

here I must know all Do you think you can keep anything from me now?

*Theodore* What else do you want to know?

*Christine* Why—why did he fight a duel?

*Theodore* I don't know the reason

*Christine* With whom, with whom? . . . You surely know who killed him? . . . Well, well, who

*Theodore* Nobody you know.

*Christine* Who, who?

*Toni*. Christine!

*Christine* Who? You tell me! [To TONI]

Father, you tell me [No answer She starts to go out VYRING holds her back] Can't I know who killed him, and for what cause?

*Theodore* It was . . . a trivial cause

*Christine* You're not telling the truth . . . why, why

*Theodore* Dear Christine . . .

*Christine* [As if about to interrupt, goes up to him, looks at him in silence, then suddenly shrieks] On account of a woman?

*Theodore* No——

*Christine* Yes—for a woman [Turning to TONI] for that woman—for that woman that he loved And her husband—yes, yes, her husband killed him And I . . . what am I? What was I to him?

*Theodore* . . . haven't you anything for me at all didn't he write down anything? . . . Didn't he tell you anything for me? Didn't you find anything . . . a letter . . . a note . . .

*Theodore* [Shakes his head]

*Christine* And that evening when he was here, when you came to get him he knew it, he knew then that he perhaps would never And he went away from here to be killed for another woman No, no, it is not possible didn't he know what he was to me . . . didn't

*Theodore* He did know On the last morning, when we drove out together . . . he spoke of you too

*Christine* He spoke of me too! Of me too! And of what else? Of how many other people, of how many other things, that meant just as much to him as I did? Of me too! Oh, God! . . . And of his father and his mother and his room and of the springtime and of the city and of everything, everything that belonged to his life and that he had to give up just as much



as he gave up me—of everything he talked to you and of me too  
*Theodore* [*Moved*] He surely loved you

*Christine* Love? He? I was nothing to him but a pastime—and he died for another woman! And I— I worshiped him! Didn't he know that? That I gave him everything I could give, that I would have died for him—that he was my God and my bliss of Heaven—didn't he see that at all? He could go away from me with a smile, out of my room, and be shot down for another woman. Father, father, can you understand that?

*Vyring* [*Goes to her*] Christine!

*Theodore* [*To Toni*] Child, you might have spared me this

*Toni* [*Looks at him venomously*]

*Theodore* I have had enough distress . these last days

*Christine* [*With sudden resolve*] Theodore, take me to him—I want to see him—once more I want to see him—his face—Theodore, take me to him

*Theodore* [*With a gesture, hesitatingly*] No

*Christine* Why "no"? You can't refuse me that! Surely I can see him once more?

*Theodore* It is too late

*Christine* Too late? To see his corpse is it too late? Yes . . . yes . [*She does not understand*]

*Theodore* He was buried this morning

*Christine* [*With the greatest horror*] Buried. And I didn't know about it? They shot him and put him in his coffin and carried him out and buried him down in the earth—and I couldn't even see him once more? He's been dead two days—and you didn't come and tell me?

*Theodore* [*Much moved*] In these two days I have . . . You cannot dream all that I . . . Consider that it was my duty to notify his parents—I had to think of many things—and then my own state of mind

*Christine* Your

*Theodore* And then the . . . it was done

very quietly and friends

Only the closest relatives

*Christine* The closest——? And I——? What am I?

*Toni* They would have asked that

*Christine* What am I? Less than all the rest——? Less than his relatives, less than—you?

*Vyring* My child, my child. Come to me, to me. [*He embraces her* *To THEODORE*] Go. leave me alone with her

*Theodore* I am very. [*With tears in his voice*] I never suspected

*Christine* Never suspected what? That I loved him? [*VYRING draws her to him, THEODORE looks down, TONI stands near CHRISTINE forcing herself*] Take me to his grave!

*Vyring* No, no——

*Toni* Don't go, Christine

*Theodore* Christine later . . . tomorrow . . . when you are calmer——

*Christine* Tomorrow? When I shall be calmer? And in a month completely consoled, eh? And in six months I can laugh again, can I? [*Laughing shrilly*] And then when will the next lover come?

*Vyring* Christine .

*Christine* Stay here, then . . . I can find the way alone

*Vyring and Toni* [*Together*] Don't go

*Christine* It's even better . . . if I . . . let me go, let go

*Vyring* Christine, stay here

*Toni* Don't go! Perhaps you'll find the other one there—praying

*Christine* [*To herself, her eyes fixed*] I won't pry there. no. [*She rushes out, the others speechless for the moment*]

*Vyring* Hurry after her

[*THEODORE and TONI exeunt*]

*Vyring* I can't, I can't. [*He goes painfully from the door to the window*] What does she want . . . what does she want. [*He looks through the window*] She won't come back—she won't come back! [*He sinks to the floor, sobbing loudly*]

THE END





THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

By OSCAR WILDE

*Professional production rights of "The  
Importance of Being Earnest" are con-  
trolled by Charles Frohman, Inc, New  
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## OSCAR WILDE AND HIS PLAYS

OSCAR WILDE was born in Dublin in 1854, the son of a distinguished physician. He was educated in Trinity College, Dublin, and at Oxford University, travelled on the Continent, settled in London, and became known with the publication of his first volume of poems in 1881. His reputation grew with the subsequent publication of his brilliant essays, his short stories, his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and the production of his plays. He had reached the pinnacle of his fame when, as the result of his notorious trial, he spent two years in prison. After his release, he lived in France and Italy, and died in Paris in 1900.

As a dramatist, Wilde is an anomaly. He added nothing new to English drama. His technique, in its insincerity, its sheer theatricality, followed the worst of the traditional practices. His characters are usually mere puppets, and at best mere types. And yet six of his eight plays are famous apart from the fame of their author. They were at once successful, they have held the stage, they can still entertain an audience. They are essentially the work of a brilliant writer who turned playwright in order to exhibit his virtuosity.

Between 1892 and 1895, when Wilde's more important plays were written, new currents were moving in English drama. Pinero and Jones had long since at least pointed the way towards a more truthful and sincere use of material and a more rational technique. Wilde shows nothing of this. Great writer though he was, he made plays only for immediate success in the theatre, to please his audience at any cost of sincerity and verisimilitude.

His "serious" plays, such as the celebrated *Lady Windermere's Fan*, when examined in the light of their melodramatic plots and their improbable characterization, show themselves as pieces of egregious trickery. The supposedly serious talk in them is often as unnatural as talk could be (and Wilde of course knew this perfectly well). Their saving grace—and it is a charming grace—is the brilliant persiflage that is put, as a rule, into the mouths of the minor puppets who people the background. To all of this, however, the one-act play *Salome*, founded on the biblical story of Herod and John the Baptist, is an exception. It is a genuine work of art, exquisitely fashioned, a very cameo of style.

Aside from *Salome*, Wilde's masterpiece and his one really sincere work is *The Importance of Being Earnest*. That this flippant piece of studied insincerity should be a sincere work of art is a paradox. But here Wilde is himself, here he does what he can naturally do well. He has taken whatever is good in the style of his melodramas, that is, the imitably clever talk, and rounded out a play with it—a play that is little but clever talk. And his light dialogue is as good as his serious dialogue is bad, that is, it is distinctly the best of its kind. Since *The School for Scandal* nothing else has come near it. With that sparkling play it belongs as an "artificial comedy" or "comedy of wit," and traces its lineage straight back through Sheridan to Congreve.

With a perfectly constructed plot, the very essence of farce, with characters each of whom assumes a consistent and steadily maintained pose, with speech that reaches the very heights of superficial cleverness and satirical point, each line of which ripples into laughter, *The Importance of Being Earnest* has already become a classic, differing from most other classics in that it is actually read and that it often appears on the stage. When it was first produced in London, most of the critics were horrified or disgusted. Some of them actually called it "an insult to the public"—why, heaven only knows. Bernard Shaw rather liked it. When produced in New York it was generally considered only a flippant trifle. But the flippant trifle at once took the secure place on the stage that was its by right, and has ever since retained it though, no doubt, as frivolous and unashamed as ever. Its revivals have been countless and will, doubtless, continue, for its situations are perennially amusing and the jewels of its amazing dialogue still sparkle brilliantly after a generation of constant wear.

*The Importance of Being Earnest* was first produced in London, on February 14, 1895. Its first production in America was in New York on April 22, 1895.

## CHARACTERS

JOHN WORTHING, J.P., *of the Manor House, Woolton, Hertfordshire*

ALGERNON MONCRIEF, *his friend*

THE REVEREND CANON CHASUBLE, *rector of Woolton*

LADY BRACKNELL

THE HONORABLE GWENDOLEN FAIRFAX, *her daughter*

CECILY CARDEW, *John Worthing's ward*

MISS PRISM, *Cecily's governess*

MERRIMAN, *a butler*

LANE, *a manservant*

*The action takes place in London and at a country house in Hertfordshire within the last decade of the nineteenth century*

# THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

## ACT ONE

*The morning-room in ALGERNON MONCRIEF'S flat in Half-Moon Street, London. The room is luxuriously and artistically furnished. The sound of a piano is heard in the adjoining room.*

LANE is arranging afternoon tea on the table, and after the music has ceased, ALGERNON enters

Algernon Did you hear what I was playing, Lane?

Lane I didn't think it polite to listen, sir

Algernon I'm sorry for that, for your sake I don't play accurately—anyone can play accurately—but I play with wonderful expression. As far as the piano is concerned, sentiment is my forte. I keep science for Life.

Lane Yes, sir

Algernon And, speaking of the science of Life, have you got the cucumber sandwiches cut for Lady Bracknell?

Lane Yes, sir

[LANE hands the sandwiches on a salver

ALGERNON inspects them, takes two, and sits down on the sofa]

Algernon Oh by the way, Lane, I see from your book that on Thursday night, when Lord Shoreman and Mr Worthing were dining with me, eight bottles of champagne are entered as having been consumed.

Lane Yes, sir, eight bottles and a pint.

Algernon Why is it that at a bachelor's establishment the servants invariably drink the champagne? I ask merely for information.

Lane I attribute it to the superior quality of the wine, sir. I have often observed that in married households the champagne is rarely of a first-rate brand.

Algernon Good Heavens! Is marriage so demoralizing as that?

Lane I believe it is a very pleasant state, sir. I have had very little experience of it myself up to the present. I have only been married once. That was in consequence of a misunderstanding between myself and a young woman.

Algernon [*languidly*] I don't know that I am much interested in your family life, Lane.

Lane No, sir, it is not a very interesting subject. I never think of it myself.

Algernon Very natural, I am sure. That will do, Lane, thank you.

Lane Thank you, sir. [*He goes out*]

Algernon Lane's views on marriage seem somewhat lax. Really, if the lower orders don't set us a good example, what on earth is the use of them? They seem, as a class, to have absolutely no sense of moral responsibility. [LANE enters]

Lane Mr Ernest Worthing

[JACK enters. LANE goes out]

Algernon How are you, my dear Ernest? What brings you up to town?

Jack Oh, pleasure, pleasure! What else should bring one anywhere? Eating as usual, I see, Algy!

Algernon [*stiffly*] I believe it is customary in good society to take some slight refreshment at five o'clock. Where have you been since last Thursday?

Jack [*sitting down on the sofa*] In the country.

Algernon What on earth do you do there?

Jack [*pulling off his gloves*] When one is in town, one amuses oneself. When one is in the country, one amuses other people. It is excessively boring.

Algernon And who are the people you amuse?

Jack [*laurelly*] Oh, neighbours, neighbours.

Algernon Got nice neighbours in your part of Shropshire?

Jack Perfectly horrid! Never speak to one of them.

Algernon How immensely you must amuse them! [*He goes over and takes a sandwich*] By the way, Shropshire is your county, is it not?

Jack Eh? Shropshire? Yes, of course. Hallo! Why all these cups? Why cucumber sandwiches? Why such reckless extravagance in one so young? Who is coming to tea?

Algernon Oh! merely Aunt Augusta and Gwendolen.

*Jack* How perfectly delightful!

*Algernon* Yes, that is all very well, but I am afraid Aunt Augusta won't quite approve of your being here

*Jack* May I ask why?

*Algernon* My dear fellow, the way you flirt with Gwendolen is perfectly disgraceful. It is almost as bad as the way Gwendolen flirts with you

*Jack* I am in love with Gwendolen. I have come up to town expressly to propose to her

*Algernon* I thought you had come up for pleasure? I call that business

*Jack* How utterly unromantic you are!

*Algernon* I really don't see anything romantic in proposing. It is very romantic to be in love. But there is nothing romantic about a definite proposal. Why, one may be accepted! One usually is, I believe. Then the excitement is all over. The very essence of romance is uncertainty. If ever I get married, I'll certainly try to forget the fact

*Jack* I have no doubt about that, dear Algy. The Divorce Court was specially invented for people whose memories are so curiously constituted

*Algernon* Oh! there is no use speculating on that subject. Divorces are made in Heaven—

[*JACK puts out his hand to take a sandwich* *ALGERNON* at once interferes]

Please don't touch the cucumber sandwiches. They are ordered specially for Aunt Augusta. [*He takes one and eats it*]

*Jack* Well, you have been eating them all the time

*Algernon* That is quite a different matter. She is my aunt. [*He takes a plate from below*] Have some bread and butter. The bread and butter is for Gwendolen. Gwendolen is devoted to bread and butter

*Jack* [*advancing to the table and helping himself*] And very good bread and butter it is, too

*Algernon* Well, my dear fellow, you need not eat as if you were going to eat it all. You behave as if you were married to her already. You are not married to her already, and I don't think you ever will be

*Jack* Why on earth do you say that?

*Algernon* Well, in the first place girls never marry the men they flirt with. Girls don't think it right

*Jack* Oh, that is nonsense!

*Algernon* It isn't. It is a great truth. It accounts for the extraordinary number of bachelors that one sees all over the place. In the second place, I don't give my consent

*Jack* Your consent!

*Algernon* My dear fellow, Gwendolen is my first cousin. And before I allow you to marry her, you will have to clear up the whole question of Cecily. [*He rings the bell*]

*Jack* Cecily! What on earth do you mean? What do you mean, Algy, by Cecily? I don't know anyone of the name of Cecily

[*Lane enters*]

*Algernon* Bring me that cigarette case Mr Worthing left in the smoking-room the last time he dined here

*Lane* Yes, sir [*He goes out*]

*Jack* Do you mean to say you have had my cigarette case all this time? I wish to goodness you had let me know. I have been writing frantic letters to Scotland Yard about it. I was very nearly offering a large reward

*Algernon* Well, I wish you would offer one. I happen to be more than usually hard up

*Jack* There is no good offering a large reward now that the thing is found

[*Lane enters with the cigarette case on a salver* *ALGERNON* takes it at once *LANE* goes out]

*Algernon* I think that is rather mean of you, Ernest. I must say. [*He opens the case and examines it*] However, it makes no matter, for, now that I look at the inscription, I find that the thing isn't yours after all

*Jack* Of course it's mine. [*Moving to him*] You have seen me with it a hundred times, and you have no right whatsoever to read what is written inside. It is a very ungentlemanly thing to read a private cigarette case

*Algernon* Oh! it is absurd to have a hard-and-fast rule about what one should read and what one shouldn't. More than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn't read

*Jack* I am quite aware of the fact, and I don't propose to discuss modern culture. It isn't the sort of thing one should talk of in private. I simply want my cigarette case back

*Algernon* Yes, but this isn't your cigarette case. This cigarette case is a present from someone of the name of Cecily, and you said you didn't know anyone of that name.

*Jack* Well, if you want to know, Cecily happens to be my aunt.

*Algernon* Your aunt!

*Jack* Yes. Charming old lady she is, too. Lives at Tunbridge Wells. Just give it back to me, Algy.

*Algernon* [retreating to the back of the sofa] But why does she call herself little Cecily if she is your aunt and lives at Tunbridge Wells? [Reading] "From little Cecily with her fondest love."

*Jack* [moving to the sofa and kneeling upon it] My dear fellow, what on earth is there in that? Some aunts are tall, some aunts are not tall. That is a matter that surely an aunt may be allowed to decide for herself. You seem to think that every aunt should be exactly like your aunt! That is absurd! For Heaven's sake give me back my cigarette case. [He follows ALGERNON round the room.]

*Algernon* Yes. But why does your aunt call you her uncle? "From little Cecily, with her fondest love to her dear Uncle Jack." There is no objection, I admit, to an aunt being a small aunt, but why an aunt, no matter what her size may be, should call her own nephew her uncle, I can't quite make out. Besides, your name isn't Jack at all, it is Ernest.

*Jack* It isn't Ernest, it's Jack. ✓

*Algernon* You have always told me it was Ernest. I have introduced you to everyone as Ernest. You answer to the name of Ernest. You look as if your name was Ernest. You are the most earnest looking person I ever saw in my life. It is perfectly absurd your saying that your name isn't Ernest. It's on your cards. Here is one of them [taking it from the case]. "Mr Ernest Worthing, B 4, The Albany." I'll keep this as a proof your name is Ernest if ever you attempt to deny it to me, or to Gwendolen, or to anyone else. [He puts the card in his pocket.]

*Jack* Well, my name is Ernest in town and Jack in the country, and the cigarette case was given to me in the country.

*Algernon* Yes, but that does not account for the fact that your small Aunt Cecily, who lives at Tunbridge Wells, calls you her

dear uncle. Come, old boy, you had much better have the thing out at once.

*Jack* My dear Algy, you talk exactly as if you were a dentist. It is very vulgar to talk like a dentist when one isn't a dentist. It produces a false impression.

*Algernon* Well, that is exactly what dentists always do. Now, go on! Tell me the whole thing. I may mention that I have always suspected you of being a confirmed and secret Bunburyist, and I am quite sure of it now.

*Jack* Bunburyist? What on earth do you mean by a Bunburyist?

*Algernon* I'll reveal to you the meaning of that incomparable expression as soon as you are kind enough to inform me why you are Ernest in town and Jack in the country.

*Jack* Well, produce my cigarette case first.

*Algernon* Here it is. [He hands the cigarette case.] Now produce your explanation, and pray make it improbable. [He sits on the sofa.]

*Jack* My dear fellow, there is nothing improbable about my explanation at all. In fact it's perfectly ordinary. Old Mr Thomas Cardew, who adopted me when I was a little boy, made me in his will guardian to his grand-daughter, Miss Cecily Cardew. Cecily, who addresses me as her uncle from motives of respect that you could not possibly appreciate, lives at my place in the country under the charge of her admirable governess, Miss Prism.

*Algernon* Where is that place in the country, by the way?

*Jack* That is nothing to you, dear boy. You are not going to be invited. I may tell you candidly that the place is not in Shropshire.

*Algernon* I suspected that, my dear fellow! I have Bunbured all over Shropshire on two separate occasions. Now, go on. Why are you Ernest in town and Jack in the country?

*Jack* My dear Algy, I don't know whether you will be able to understand my real motives. You are hardly serious enough. When one is placed in the position of guardian, one has to adopt a very high moral tone on all subjects. It's one's duty to do so. And as a high moral tone can hardly be said to conduce very much to either one's health or one's happiness, in



order to get up to town I have always pretended to have a younger brother of the name of Ernest, who lives in the Albany, and gets into the most dreadful scrapes That, my dear Algy, is the whole truth pure and simple

*Algernon* The truth is rarely pure and never simple Modern life would be very tedious if it were either, and modern literature a complete impossibility!

✓ *Jack* That wouldn't be at all a bad thing

*Algernon* Literary criticism is not your forte, my dear fellow Don't try it You should leave that to people who haven't been at a University They do it so well in the daily papers What you really are is a Bunburyist I was quite right in saying you were a Bunburyist You are one of the most advanced Bunburyists I know

*Jack* What on earth do you mean?

*Algernon* You have invented a very useful younger brother called Ernest, in order that you may be able to come up to town as often as you like I have invented an invaluable permanent invalid called Bunbury, in order that I may be able to go down into the country whenever I choose Bunbury is perfectly invaluable If it wasn't for Bunbury's extraordinary bad health, for instance, I wouldn't be able to dine with you at Willis's to-night, for I have been really engaged to Aunt Augusta for more than a week

*Jack* I haven't asked you to dine with me anywhere to-night

*Algernon* I know You are absolutely careless about sending out invitations It is very foolish of you Nothing annoys people so much as not receiving invitations

*Jack* You had much better dine with your Aunt Augusta

*Algernon* I haven't the smallest intention of doing anything of the kind To begin with, I dined there on Monday, and once a week is quite enough to dine with one's own relatives In the second place, whenever I do dine there, I am always treated as a member of the family, and sent down with either no woman at all, or two In the third place, I know perfectly well whom she will place me next to, to-night She will place me next Mary Farquhar, who always flirts with her own husband across the dinner-table That is not very

pleasant Indeed, it is not even decent and that sort of thing is enormously on the increase The amount of women in London who flirt with their own husbands is perfectly scandalous It looks so bad It is simply washing one's clean linen in public Besides, now that I know you to be a confirmed Bunburyist, I naturally want to talk to you about Bunburying I want to tell you the rules

*Jack* I'm not a Bunburyist at all If Gwendolen accepts me, I am going to kill my brother Indeed I think I'll kill him in any case Cecily is a little too much interested in him It is rather a bore So I am going to get rid of Ernest And I strongly advise you to do the same with Mr with your invalid friend who has the absurd name

*Algernon* Nothing will induce me to part with Bunbury, and if you ever get married, which seems to me extremely problematic, you will be very glad to know Bunbury A man who marries without knowing Bunbury has a very tedious time of it

*Jack* That is nonsense If I marry a charming girl like Gwendolen, and she is the only girl I ever saw in my life that I would marry, I certainly won't want to know Bunbury

*Algernon* Then your wife will You don't seem to realize, that in married life three is company and two is none

*Jack* [*sententiously*] That, my dear young friend, is the theory that the corrupt French Drama has been propounding for the last fifty years

*Algernon* Yes, and that the happy English home has proved in half the time

*Jack* For heaven's sake, don't try to be cynical It's perfectly easy to be cynical

*Algernon* My dear fellow, it isn't easy to be anything now-a-days There's such a lot of beastly competition about

[*The sound of an electric bell is heard*] Ah! that must be Aunt Augusta Only relatives, or creditors, ever ring in that Wagnerian manner Now, if I get her out of the way for ten minutes, so that you can have an opportunity for proposing to Gwendolen, may I dine with you to-night at Willis's?

*Jack* I suppose so, if you want to

*Algernon* Yes, but you must be serious about it I hate people who are not serious about meals It is so shallow of them

[LANE enters]

Lane Lady Bracknell and Miss Fairfax

[ALGERNON goes forward to meet them.

LADY BRACKNELL and GWENDOLEN enter]

Lady Bracknell Good afternoon, dear Algernon, I hope you are behaving very well

Algernon I'm feeling very well, Aunt Augusta

Lady Bracknell That's not quite the same thing In fact the two things rarely go together [She sees JACK and bows to him with icy coldness]

Algernon [to GWENDOLEN] Dear me, you are smart!

Gwendolen I am always smart! Aren't I, Mr Worthing?

Jack You're quite perfect, Miss Fairfax

Gwendolen Oh! I hope I am not that It would leave no room for developments, and I intend to develop in many directions

[GWENDOLEN and JACK sit down together in the corner]

Lady Bracknell I'm sorry if we are a little late, Algernon, but I was obliged to call on dear Lady Harbury I hadn't been there since her poor husband's death I never saw a woman so altered, she looks quite twenty years younger And now I'll have a cup of tea, and one of those nice cucumber sandwiches you promised me

Algernon Certainly, Aunt Augusta [He goes over to the tea-table]

Lady Bracknell Won't you come and sit here, Gwendolen?

Gwendolen Thanks, mamma, I'm quite comfortable where I am

Algernon [picking up the empty plate in horror] Good heavens! Lane! Why are there no cucumber sandwiches? I ordered them specially

Lane [gravely] There were no cucumbers in the market this morning, sir I went down twice

Algernon No cucumbers!

Lane No, sir Not even for ready money

Algernon That will do, Lane, thank you

Lane Thank you, sir [He goes out]

Algernon I am greatly distressed, Aunt Augusta, about there being no cucumbers, not even for ready money

Lady Bracknell It really makes no matter, Algernon I had some crumpets with Lady Harbury, who seems to me to be living entirely for pleasure now

Algernon I hear her hair has turned quite gold from grief

Lady Bracknell It certainly has changed its colour From what cause I, of course, cannot say

[ALGERNON crosses and hands tea] Thank you I've quite a treat for you to-night, Algernon I am going to send you down with Mary Farquhar She is such a nice woman, and so attentive to her husband It's delightful to watch them

Algernon I am afraid, Aunt Augusta, I shall have to give up the pleasure of dining with you to-night after all

Lady Bracknell [frowning] I hope not, Algernon It would put my table completely out Your uncle would have to dine upstairs Fortunately he is accustomed to that

Algernon It is a great bore, and, I need hardly say, a terrible disappointment to me, but the fact is I have just had a telegram to say that my poor friend Bunbury is very ill again [He exchanges glances with JACK] They seem to think I should be with him

Lady Bracknell. It is very strange This Mr Bunbury seems to suffer from curiously bad health

Algernon Yes, poor Bunbury is a dreadful invalid

Lady Bracknell Well, I must say, Algernon, that I think it is high time that Mr Bunbury made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die This shilly-shallying with the question is absurd Nor do I in any way approve of the modern sympathy with invalids I consider it morbid Illness of any kind is hardly a thing to be encouraged in others Health is the primary duty of life I am always telling that to your poor uncle, but he never seems to take much notice as far as any improvement in his ailments goes I should be much obliged if you would ask Mr Bunbury, from me, to be kind enough not to have a relapse on Saturday, for I rely on you to arrange my music for me It is my last reception and one wants something that will encourage conversation, particularly at the end of the season when everyone has practically said whatever they had to say, which, in most cases, was probably not much

Algernon I'll speak to Bunbury, Aunt Augusta, if he is still conscious, and I think I can promise you he'll be all right by

Saturday You see, if one plays good music, people don't listen, and if one plays bad music, people don't talk But I'll run over the programme I've drawn out, if you will kindly come into the next room for a moment

*Lady Bracknell* Thank you, Algernon It is very thoughtful of you [*Rising, and following ALGERNON*] I'm sure the programme will be delightful, after a few expurgations French songs I cannot possibly allow People always seem to think that they are improper, and either look shocked, which is vulgar, or laugh, which is worse But German sounds a thoroughly respectable language, and indeed, I believe is so Gwendolen, you will accompany me

*Gwendolen* Certainly, mamma

[*LADY BRACKNELL and ALGERNON go into the music-room GWENDOLEN remains behind*]

*Jack* Charming day it has been, Miss Fairfax

*Gwendolen* Pray don't talk to me about the weather, Mr Worthing Whenever people talk to me about the weather, I always feel quite certain that they mean something else And that makes me so nervous

*Jack* I do mean something else

*Gwendolen* I thought so In fact, I am never wrong

*Jack* And I would like to be allowed to take advantage of Lady Bracknell's temporary absence

*Gwendolen* I would certainly advise you to do so Mamma has a way of coming back suddenly into a room that I have often had to speak to her about

*Jack* [*nervously*] Miss Fairfax, ever since I met you I have admired you more than any girl I have ever met since I met you

*Gwendolen* Yes, I am quite aware of the fact And I often wish that in public, at any rate, you had been more demonstrative For me you have always had an irresistible fascination Even before I met you I was far from indifferent to you

[*JACK looks at her in amazement*] We live, as I hope you know, Mr Worthing, in an age of ideals The fact is constantly mentioned in the more expensive monthly magazines, and has reached the provincial pulpits, I am told, and my ideal has always been to love some one of the

name of Ernest There is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence The moment Algernon first mentioned to me that he had a friend called Ernest, I knew I was destined to love you

*Jack* You really love me, Gwendolen?

*Gwendolen* Passionately!

*Jack* Darling! You don't know how happy you've made me

*Gwendolen* My own Ernest!

*Jack* But you don't really mean to say that you couldn't love me if my name wasn't Ernest?

*Gwendolen* But your name is Ernest

*Jack* Yes, I know it is But supposing it was something else? Do you mean to say you couldn't love me then?

*Gwendolen* [*ghbly*] Ah! that is clearly a metaphysical speculation, and like most metaphysical speculations has very little reference at all to the actual facts of real life, as we know them

*Jack* Personally, darling, to speak quite candidly, I don't much care about the name of Ernest I don't think that name suits me at all

*Gwendolen* It suits you perfectly It is a divine name It has a music of its own It produces vibrations

*Jack* Well, really, Gwendolen, I must say that I think there are lots of other much nicer names I think, Jack, for instance, a charming name

*Gwendolen* Jack? No, there is very little music in the name Jack, if any at all, indeed It does not thrill It produces absolutely no vibrations I have known several Jacks, and they all, without exception, were more than usually plain Besides, Jack is a notorious domesticity for John! And I pity any woman who is married to a man called John She would probably never be allowed to know the entrancing pleasure of a single moment's solitude The only really safe name is Ernest

*Jack* Gwendolen, I must get christened at once—I mean we must get married at once There is no time to be lost

*Gwendolen* Married, Mr Worthing?

*Jack* [*astounded*] Well surely You know that I love you, and you led me to believe, Miss Fairfax, that you were not absolutely indifferent to me

*Gwendolen* I adore you But you haven't proposed to me yet Nothing has been

said at all about marriage The subject has not even been touched on

Jack Well may I propose to you now?

Gwendolen I think it would be an admirable opportunity And to spare you any possible disappointment, Mr Worthing, I think it only fair to tell you quite frankly beforehand that I am fully determined to accept you

Jack Gwendolen!

Gwendolen Yes, Mr Worthing, what have you got to say to me?

Jack You know what I have got to say to you

Gwendolen Yes, but you don't say it

Jack Gwendolen, will you marry me? *[He goes on his knees]*

Gwendolen Of course I will, darling How long you have been about it! I am afraid you have had very little experience in how to propose

Jack My own one, I have never loved anyone in the world but you

Gwendolen Yes, but men often propose for practice I know my brother Gerald does All my girl-friends tell me so What wonderfully blue eyes you have, Ernest! They are quite, quite blue I hope you will always look at me just like that, especially when there are other people present

*[LADY BRACKNELL enters]*

Lady Bracknell Mr Worthing! Rise, sir, from this semi-recumbent posture It is most indecorous

Gwendolen Mamma!

*[JACK tries to rise, GWENDOLEN restrains him]*

I must beg you to retire This is no place for you Besides, Mr Worthing has not quite finished yet

Lady Bracknell Finished what, may I ask?

Gwendolen I am engaged to Mr Worthing, mamma

*[GWENDOLEN and JACK rise together]*

Lady Bracknell Pardon me, you are not engaged to anyone When you do become engaged to some one, I, or your father, should his health permit him, will inform you of the fact An engagement should come on a young girl as a surprise, pleasant or unpleasant, as the case may be It is hardly a matter that she could be allowed to arrange for herself And now I have a few questions to put to you, Mr

Worthing While I am making these inquiries, you, Gwendolen, will wait for me below in the carriage

Gwendolen *[reproachfully]* Mamma!

Lady Bracknell In the carriage, Gwendolen!

*[GWENDOLEN goes to the door She and JACK blow kisses to each other behind LADY BRACKNELL'S back LADY BRACKNELL looks vaguely about as if she could not understand what the noise was She finally turns round]*

Gwendolen, the carriage!

Gwendolen Yes, mamma *[She goes out, looking back at JACK]*

Lady Bracknell *[sitting down]* You can take a seat, Mr Worthing *[She looks in her pocket for note-book and pencil]*

Jack Thank you, Lady Bracknell, I prefer standing

Lady Bracknell *[pencil and note-book in hand]* I feel bound to tell you that you are not down on my list of eligible young men, although I have the same list as the dear Duchess of Bolton has We work together, in fact However, I am quite ready to enter your name, should your answers be what a really affectionate mother requires Do you smoke?

Jack Well, yes, I must admit I smoke

Lady Bracknell I am glad to hear it A man should always have an occupation of some kind There are far too many idle men in London as it is How old are you?

Jack Twenty-nine

Lady Bracknell A very good age to be married at I have always been of opinion that a man who desires to get married should know either everything or nothing Which do you know?

Jack *[after some hesitation]* I know nothing, Lady Bracknell

Lady Bracknell I am pleased to hear it I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit, touch it and the bloom is gone The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square What is your income?

Jack Between seven and eight thousand a year

*Lady Bracknell* [makes a note in her book] In land, or in investments?

*Jack* In investments, chiefly.

*Lady Bracknell* That is satisfactory. What between the duties expected of one during one's life-time, and the duties exacted from one after one's death, land has ceased to be either a profit or a pleasure. It gives one position, and prevents one from keeping it up. That's all that can be said about land.

*Jack* I have a country house with some land, of course, attached to it, about fifteen hundred acres, I believe, but I don't depend on that for my real income. In fact, as far as I can make out, the poachers are the only people who make anything out of it.

*Lady Bracknell* A country house! How many bedrooms? Well, that point can be cleared up afterwards. You have a town house, I hope? A girl with a simple, unspoiled nature, like Gwendolen, could hardly be expected to reside in the country.

*Jack* Well, I own a house in Belgrave Square, but it is let by the year to Lady Bloxham. Of course, I can get it back whenever I like, at six months' notice.

*Lady Bracknell* Lady Bloxham? I don't know her.

*Jack* Oh, she goes about very little. She is a lady considerably advanced in years.

*Lady Bracknell* Ah, now-a-days that is no guarantee of respectability of character. What number in Belgrave Square?

*Jack* 149.

*Lady Bracknell* [shaking her head] The unfashionable side. I thought there was something. However, that could easily be altered.

*Jack* Do you mean the fashion, or the side?

*Lady Bracknell* [sternly] Both, if necessary, I presume. What are your politics?

*Jack* Well, I am afraid I really have none. I am a Liberal Unionist.

*Lady Bracknell* Oh, they count as Tories. They dine with us. Or come in the evening, at any rate. Now to minor matters. Are your parents living?

*Jack* I have lost both my parents.

*Lady Bracknell* Both? That seems like carelessness. Who was your father? He was evidently a man of some wealth. Was he born in what the Radical papers call

the purple of commerce, or did he rise from the ranks of the aristocracy?

*Jack* I am afraid I really don't know. The fact is, Lady Bracknell, I said I had lost my parents. It would be nearer the truth to say that my parents seem to have lost me. . . I don't actually know who I am by birth. I was . . . well, I was found.

*Lady Bracknell* Found!

*Jack* The late Mr Thomas Cardew, an old gentleman of a very charitable and kindly disposition, found me, and gave me the name of Worthing, because he happened to have a first-class ticket for Worthing in his pocket at the time. Worthing is a place in Sussex. It is a seaside resort.

*Lady Bracknell* Where did the charitable gentleman who had a first-class ticket for this seaside resort find you?

*Jack* [gravely] In a hand-bag.

*Lady Bracknell* A hand-bag?

*Jack* [very seriously] Yes, Lady Bracknell. I was in a hand-bag—a somewhat large, black leather hand-bag, with handles to it—an ordinary hand-bag in fact.

*Lady Bracknell* In what locality did this Mr James, or Thomas, Cardew come across this ordinary hand-bag?

*Jack* In the cloak-room at Victoria Station. It was given to him in mistake for his own.

*Lady Bracknell* The cloak-room at Victoria Station?

*Jack* Yes. The Brighton line.

*Lady Bracknell* The line is immaterial. Mr Worthing, I confess I feel somewhat bewildered by what you have just told me. To be born, or at any rate bred, in a hand-bag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that remind one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. And I presume you know what that unfortunate movement led to? As for the particular locality in which the hand-bag was found, a cloak-room at a railway station might serve to conceal a social indiscretion—has probably, indeed, been used for that purpose before now—but it could hardly be regarded as an assured basis for a recognized position in good society.

*Jack* May I ask you, then, what you would advise me to do? I need hardly say I would do anything in the world to ensure Gwendolen's happiness.

*Lady Bracknell* I would strongly advise you, Mr Worthing, to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible, and to make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over

*Jack* Well, I don't see how I could possibly manage to do that I can produce the hand-bag at any moment It is in my dressing-room at home I really think that should satisfy you, *Lady Bracknell*

*Lady Bracknell* Me, sir! What has it to do with me? You can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter—a girl brought up with the utmost care—to marry into a cloak-room, and form an alliance with a parcel? Good morning, Mr Worthing! [*She sweeps out in majestic indignation*]

*Jack* Good morning!

[*ALGERNON, from the other room, strikes up the Wedding March JACK looks perfectly furious, and goes to the door*]

For goodness' sake don't play that ghastly tune, Algy! How idiotic you are!

[*The music stops, and ALGERNON enters cheerily*]

*Algernon* Didn't it go off all right, old boy? You don't mean to say Gwendolen refused you? I know it is a way she has She is always refusing people I think it is most ill-natured of her

*Jack* Oh, Gwendolen is as right as a trivet As far as she is concerned, we are engaged Her mother is perfectly unbearable Never met such a Gorgon I don't really know what a Gorgon is like, but I am quite sure that Lady Bracknell is one In any case, she is a monster, without being a myth, which is rather unfair I beg your pardon, Algy, I suppose I shouldn't talk about your own aunt in that way before you

*Algernon* My dear boy, I love hearing my relations abused It is the only thing that makes me put up with them at all Relations are simply a tedious pack of people, who haven't got the remotest knowledge of how to live, nor the smallest instinct about when to die

*Jack* Oh, that is nonsense!

*Algernon* It isn't!

*Jack* Well, I won't argue about the matter You always want to argue about things

*Algernon* That is exactly what things were originally made for

*Jack* Upon my word, if I thought that, I'd shoot myself [*After a pause*] You don't think there is any chance of Gwendolen becoming like her mother in about a hundred and fifty years, do you, Algy?

*Algernon* All women become like their mothers That is their tragedy No man does That's his

*Jack* Is that clever?

*Algernon* It is perfectly phrased!—and quite as true as any observation in civilized life should be

*Jack* I am sick to death of cleverness Everybody is clever now-a-days You can't go anywhere without meeting clever people The thing has become an absolute public nuisance I wish to goodness we had a few fools left

*Algernon* We have

*Jack* I should extremely like to meet them What do they talk about?

✓*Algernon* The fools? Oh! about the clever people, of course

*Jack* What fools!

*Algernon* By the way, did you tell Gwendolen the truth about your being Ernest in town, and Jack in the country?

*Jack* [*in a very patronising manner*] My dear fellow, the truth isn't quite the sort of thing one tells to a nice, sweet, refined girl What extraordinary ideas you have about the way to behave to a woman!

*Algernon* The only way to behave to a woman is to make love to her, if she is pretty, and to someone else if she is plain

*Jack* Oh, that is nonsense

*Algernon* What about your brother? What about the profligate Ernest?

*Jack* Oh, before the end of the week I shall have got rid of him I'll say he died in Paris of apoplexy Lots of people die of apoplexy, quite suddenly, don't they?

*Algernon* Yes, but it's hereditary, my dear fellow It's a sort of thing that runs in families You had much better say a severe chill

*Jack* You are sure a severe chill isn't hereditary, or anything of that kind?

*Algernon* Of course it isn't!

*Jack* Very well, then My poor brother Ernest is carried off suddenly in Paris, by a severe chill That gets rid of him

*Algernon* But I thought you said that Miss Cardew was a little too much

interested in your poor brother Ernest? Won't she feel his loss a good deal?

*Jack* Oh, that is all right Cecily is not a silly, romantic girl, I am glad to say She has got a capital appetite, goes for long walks, and pays no attention at all to her lessons

*Algernon* I would rather like to see Cecily

*Jack* I will take very good care you never do She is excessively pretty, and she is only just eighteen

*Algernon* Have you told Gwendolen yet that you have an excessively pretty ward who is only just eighteen?

*Jack* Oh! one doesn't blurt these things out to people Cecily and Gwendolen are perfectly certain to be extremely great friends I'll bet you anything you like that half an hour after they have met, they will be calling each other sister

*Algernon* Women only do that when they have called each other a lot of other things first Now, my dear boy, if we want to get a good table at Willis's, we really must go and dress Do you know it is nearly seven?

*Jack* [*irritably*] Oh! it always is nearly seven

*Algernon* Well, I'm hungry

*Jack* I never knew you when you weren't

*Algernon* What shall we do after dinner? Go to a theatre?

*Jack* Oh, no! I loathe listening

*Algernon* Well, let us go to the Club?

*Jack* Oh, no! I hate talking

*Algernon* Well, we might trot round to the Empire at ten?

*Jack* Oh, no! I can't bear looking at things It is so silly

*Algernon* Well, what shall we do?

*Jack* Nothing!

*Algernon* It is awfully hard work doing nothing However, I don't mind hard work where there is no definite object of any kind [LANE enters]

*Lane* Miss Fairfax

[GWENDOLEN enters LANE goes out]

*Algernon* Gwendolen, upon my word!

*Gwendolen* Algy, kindly turn your back I have something very particular to say to Mr Worthing

*Algernon* Really, Gwendolen, I don't think I can allow this at all

*Gwendolen* Algy, you always adopt a

strictly immoral attitude towards life You are not quite old enough to do that

[ALGERNON retires to the fireplace]

*Jack* My own darling!

*Gwendolen* Ernest, we may never be married From the expression on mamma's face, I fear we never shall Few parents now-a-days pay any regard to what their children say to them The old-fashioned respect for the young is fast dying out Whatever influence I ever had over mamma, I lost at the age of three But although she may prevent us from becoming man and wife, and I may marry someone else, and marry often, nothing that she can possibly do can alter my eternal devotion to you

*Jack* Dear Gwendolen!

*Gwendolen* The story of your romantic origin, as related to me by mamma, with unpleasing comments, has naturally stirred the deeper fibres of my nature Your Christian name has an irresistible fascination The simplicity of your character makes you exquisitely incomprehensible to me Your town address at the Albany I have What is your address in the country?

*Jack* The Manor House, Woolton, Hertfordshire

[ALGERNON, who has been carefully listening, smiles to himself, and writes the address on his shirt-cuff Then he picks up the Railway Guide]

*Gwendolen* There is a good postal service, I suppose? It may be necessary to do something desperate That, of course, will require serious consideration I will communicate with you daily

*Jack* My own one!

*Gwendolen* How long do you remain in town?

*Jack* Till Monday

*Gwendolen* Good! Algy, you may turn round now

*Algernon* Thanks, I've turned round already

*Gwendolen* You may also ring the bell  
*Jack* You will let me see you to your carriage, my own darling?

*Gwendolen* Certainly [LANE enters]  
*Jack* [to LANE] I will see Miss Fairfax out

*Lane* Yes, sir

[JACK and GWENDOLEN go out LANE presents several letters on a salver to ALGERNON It is to be surmised that they are bills, as ALGERNON, after



*looking at the envelopes, tears them up]*

Algernon A glass of sherry, Lane

Lane Yes, sir

Algernon To-morrow, Lane, I'm going Bunburying ✓

Lane Yes, sir

Algernon I shall probably not be back till Monday You can put up my dress clothes, my smoking jacket, and all the Bunbury suits

Lane [*handing the sherry*] Yes, sir

Algernon I hope to-morrow will be a fine day, Lane

Lane It never is, sir

Algernon Lane, you're a perfect pessimist

Lane I do my best to give satisfaction, sir [JACK enters LANE goes out]

Jack There's a sensible, intellectual girl! the only girl I ever cared for in my life [ALGERNON is laughing immoderately] What on earth are you so amused at?

Algernon Oh, I'm a little anxious about poor Bunbury, that's all

Jack If you don't take care, your friend Bunbury will get you into a serious scrape some day

Algernon I love scrapes They are the only things that are never serious

Jack Oh, that's nonsense, Algy You never talk anything but nonsense

Algernon Nobody ever does

[JACK looks indignantly at Algernon, and leaves the room ALGERNON lights a cigarette, reads his shirt-cuff, and smiles]

## ACT TWO

*The garden at the Manor House A flight of gray stone steps leads up to the house The garden, an old-fashioned one, is full of roses The time of year is July Basket chairs, and a table covered with books, are set under a large yew tree*

MISS PRISM is seated at the table CECILY is at the back, watering flowers

Miss Prism [*calling*] Cecily, Cecily! Surely such a utilitarian occupation as the watering of flowers is rather Moulton's duty than yours? Especially at a moment when intellectual pleasures await you Your German grammar is on the table Pray open it at page fifteen We will repeat yesterday's lesson.

Cecily [*coming over very slowly*] But I don't like German It isn't at all a becoming language I know perfectly well that I look quite plain after my German lesson

Miss Prism Child, you know how anxious your guardian is that you should improve yourself in every way He laid particular stress on your German, as he was leaving for town yesterday Indeed, he always lays stress on your German when he is leaving for town

Cecily Dear Uncle Jack is so very serious! Sometimes he is so serious that I think he cannot be quite well

Miss Prism [*drawing herself up*] Your guardian enjoys the best of health, and his gravity of demeanour is especially to be commended in one so comparatively young as he is I know no one who has a higher sense of duty and responsibility

Cecily I suppose that is why he often looks a little bored when we three are together

Miss Prism Cecily! I am surprised at you Mr Worthing has many troubles in his life Idle merriment and triviality would be out of place in his conversation You must remember his constant anxiety about that unfortunate young man, his brother

Cecily I wish Uncle Jack would allow that unfortunate young man, his brother, to come down here sometimes We might have a good influence over him, Miss Prism I am sure you certainly would You know German, and geology, and things of that kind influence a man very much [*She begins to write in her diary*]

Miss Prism [*shaking her head*] I do not think that even I could produce any effect on a character that, according to his own brother's admission, is irretrievably weak and vacillating Indeed, I am not sure that I would desire to reclaim him I am not in favour of this modern mania for turning bad people into good people at a moment's notice As a man sows so let him reap You must put away your diary, Cecily I really don't see why you should keep a diary at all

Cecily I keep a diary in order to enter the wonderful secrets of my life If I didn't write them down, I should probably forget all about them

Miss Prism Memory, my dear Cecily, is the diary that we all carry about with us.

Cecily Yes, but it usually chronicles the



things that have never happened, and couldn't possibly have happened I believe that Memory is responsible for nearly all the three-volume novels that Mudie sends us

*Miss Prism* Do not speak slightly of the three-volume novel, Cecily. I wrote one myself in earlier days

*Cecily* Did you really, Miss Prism? How wonderfully clever you are! I hope it did not end happily? I don't like novels that end happily They depress me so much

*Miss Prism* The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily That is what Fiction means

*Cecily* I suppose so But it seems very unfair And was your novel ever published?

*Miss Prism* Alas! no The manuscript unfortunately was abandoned I use the word in the sense of lost or mislaid To your work, child, these speculations are profitless

*Cecily* [smiling] But I see dear Dr Chasuble coming up through the garden

*Miss Prism* [rising and advancing] Dr Chasuble! This is indeed a pleasure

[CANON CHASUBLE enters]

*Chasuble* And how are we this morning? Miss Prism, you are, I trust, well?

*Cecily* Miss Prism has just been complaining of a slight headache I think it would do her so much good to have a short stroll with you in the park, Dr Chasuble

*Miss Prism* Cecily, I have not mentioned anything about a headache

*Cecily* No, dear Miss Prism, I know that, but I felt instinctively that you had a headache Indeed I was thinking about that, and not about my German lesson, when the Rector came in

*Chasuble* I hope, Cecily, you are not inattentive

*Cecily* Oh, I am afraid I am

*Chasuble* That is strange Were I fortunate enough to be Miss Prism's pupil, I would hang upon her lips

[MISS PRISM glares]

I spoke metaphorically—my metaphor was drawn from bees Ahem! Mr Worthing, I suppose, has not returned from town yet?

*Miss Prism* We do not expect him till Monday afternoon

*Chasuble* Ah yes, he usually likes to spend his Sunday in London He is not one of those whose sole aim is enjoyment, as, by all accounts, that unfortunate young

man, his brother, seems to be But I must not disturb Egeria and her pupil any longer

*Miss Prism* Egeria? My name is Lætitia, Doctor

*Chasuble* [bowing] A classical allusion merely, drawn from the Pagan authors I shall see you both no doubt at Evensong

*Miss Prism* I think, dear Doctor, I will have a stroll with you I find I have a headache after all, and a walk might do it good

*Chasuble* With pleasure, Miss Prism, with pleasure We might go as far as the schools and back

*Miss Prism* That would be delightful Cecily, you will read your Political Economy in my absence The chapter on the Fall of the Rupee you may omit It is somewhat too sensational Even these metallic problems have their melodramatic side

[MISS PRISM goes down the garden with DR CHASUBLE CECILY picks up the books and throws them back on the table]

*Cecily* Horrid Political Economy! Horrid Geography! Horrid, horrid German!

[MERRIMAN enters with a card on a salver]

*Merriman* Mr Ernest Worthing has just driven over from the station He has brought his luggage with him

*Cecily* [taking the card and reading it] "Mr Ernest Worthing, B 4, The Albany, W" Uncle Jack's brother! Did you tell him Mr Worthing was in town?

*Merriman* Yes, Miss He seemed very much disappointed I mentioned that you and Miss Prism were in the garden He said he was anxious to speak to you privately for a moment

*Cecily* Ask Mr Ernest Worthing to come here I suppose you had better talk to the housekeeper about a room for him

*Merriman* Yes, Miss

[MERRIMAN goes]

*Cecily* I have never met any really wicked person before I feel rather frightened I am so afraid he will look just like everyone else

[ALGERNON enters, very gay and debonaire]

He does!

*Algernon* [raising his hat] You are a little cousin Cecily, I'm sure

*Cecily* You are under some strange mis-

take I am not little In fact, I am more than usually tall for my age

[ALGERNON is rather taken aback]  
But I am your cousin Cecily You, I see from your card, are Uncle Jack's brother, my cousin Ernest, my wicked cousin Ernest

Algernon Oh! I am not really wicked at all, cousin Cecily You mustn't think that I am wicked

Cecily If you are not, then you have certainly been deceiving us all in a very inexcusable manner I hope you have not been leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time That would be hypocrisy

Algernon [looking at her in amazement]  
Oh! of course I have been rather reckless

Cecily I am glad to hear it

Algernon In fact, now you mention the subject, I have been very bad in my own small way

Cecily I don't think you should be so proud of that, though I am sure it must have been very pleasant

Algernon It is much pleasanter being here with you

Cecily I can't understand how you are here at all Uncle Jack won't be back till Monday afternoon

Algernon That is a great disappointment I am obliged to go up by the first train on Monday morning I have a business appointment that I am anxious to miss

Cecily Couldn't you miss it anywhere but in London?

Algernon No, the appointment is in London

Cecily Well, I know, of course, how important it is not to keep a business engagement, if one wants to retain any sense of the beauty of life, but still I think you had better wait till Uncle Jack arrives I know he wants to speak to you about your emigrating

Algernon About my what?

Cecily Your emigrating He has gone up to buy your outfit

Algernon I certainly wouldn't let Jack buy my outfit He has no taste in neckties at all

Cecily I don't think you will require neckties Uncle Jack is sending you to Australia

Algernon Australia! I'd sooner die

Cecily Well, he said at dinner on Wednesday night, that you would have to

choose between this world, the next world, and Australia

Algernon Oh, well! The accounts I have received of Australia and the next world, are not particularly encouraging This world is good enough for me, cousin Cecily

Cecily Yes, but are you good enough for it?

Algernon I'm afraid I'm not that That is why I want you to reform me You might make that your mission, if you don't mind, cousin Cecily

Cecily I'm afraid I've not time, this afternoon

Algernon Well, would you mind my reforming myself this afternoon?

Cecily That is rather Quixotic of you But I think you should try

Algernon I will I feel better already

Cecily You are looking a little worse

Algernon That is because I am hungry

Cecily How thoughtless of me! I should have remembered that when one is going to lead an entirely new life, one requires regular and wholesome meals Won't you come in?

Algernon Thank you Might I have a button-hole first? I never have any appetite unless I have a button-hole first

Cecily A Maréchal Niel? [She picks up the scissors]

Algernon No, I'd sooner have a pink rose.

Cecily Why? [She cuts a flower]

Algernon Because you are like a pink rose, cousin Cecily

Cecily I don't think it can be right for you to talk to me like that Miss Prism never says such things to me

Algernon Then Miss Prism is a short-sighted old lady

[CECILY puts the rose in his button-hole]

You are the prettiest girl I ever saw

Cecily Miss Prism says that all good looks are a snare

Algernon They are a snare that every sensible man would like to be caught in

Cecily Oh! I don't think I would care to catch a sensible man I shouldn't know what to talk to him about

[CECILY and ALGERNON pass into the house MISS PRISM and DR. CHASUBLE return]

Miss Prism You are too much alone, dear Dr Chasuble. You should get mar-

ried A misanthrope I can understand—a womanthrope, never!

*Chasuble* [*with a scholar's shudder*] Believe me, I do not deserve so neologistic a phrase The precept as well as the practice of the Primitive Church was distinctly against matrimony

*Miss Prism* [*sententiously*] That is obviously the reason why the Primitive Church has not lasted up to the present day And you do not seem to realize, dear Doctor, that by persistently remaining single, a man converts himself into a permanent public temptation Men should be careful, this very celibacy leads weaker vessels astray

*Chasuble* But is a man not equally attractive when married?

*Miss Prism* No married man is ever attractive except to his wife

*Chasuble* And often, I've been told, not even to her

*Miss Prism* That depends on the intellectual sympathies of the woman Maturity can always be depended on Ripeness can be trusted Young women are green

[*DR CHASUBLE starts*]

I spoke horticulturally My metaphor was drawn from fruits But where is Cecily?

*Chasuble* Perhaps she followed us to the schools

[*JACK enters slowly from the back of the garden He is dressed in the deepest mourning, with crape hatband and black gloves*]

*Miss Prism* Mr Worthing!

*Chasuble* Mr Worthing!

*Miss Prism* This is indeed a surprise We did not look for you till Monday afternoon

[*JACK shakes MISS PRISM'S hand in a tragic manner*]

*Jack* I have returned sooner than I expected Dr Chasuble, I hope you are well?

*Chasuble* Dear Mr Worthing, I trust this garb of woe does not betoken some terrible calamity?

*Jack* My brother

*Miss Prism* More shameful debts and extravagance?

*Chasuble* Still leading his life of pleasure?

*Jack* [*shaking his head*] Dead!

*Chasuble* Your brother Ernest dead?

*Jack* Quite dead

*Miss Prism* What a lesson for him! I trust he will profit by it.

*Chasuble* Mr Worthing, I offer you my sincere condolence You have at least the consolation of knowing that you were always the most generous and forgiving of brothers

*Jack* Poor Ernest! He had many faults, but it is a sad, sad blow

*Chasuble* Very sad indeed Were you with him at the end?

*Jack* No He died abroad, in Paris, in fact I had a telegram last night from the manager of the Grand Hotel

*Chasuble* Was the cause of death mentioned?

*Jack* A severe chill, it seems

*Miss Prism* As a man sows, so shall he reap

*Chasuble* [*raising his hand*] Charity, dear Miss Prism, charity! None of us are perfect I myself am peculiarly susceptible to draughts Will the interment take place here?

*Jack* No He seems to have expressed a desire to be buried in Paris

*Chasuble* In Paris! [*He shakes his head*] I fear that hardly points to any very serious state of mind at the last You would no doubt wish me to make some slight allusion to this tragic domestic affliction next Sunday

[*JACK presses DR CHASUBLE'S hand convulsively*]

My sermon on the meaning of the manna in the wilderness can be adapted to almost any occasion, joyful, or, as in the present case, distressing [*All sigh*]

I have preached it at harvest celebrations, christenings, confirmations, on days of humiliation, and festal days The last time I delivered it was in the Cathedral, as a charity sermon on behalf of the Society for the Prevention of Discontentment among the Upper Orders The Bishop, who was present, was much struck by some of the analogies I drew

*Jack* Ah, that reminds me, you mentioned christenings I think, Dr Chasuble? I suppose you know how to christen all right?

[*DR CHASUBLE looks astounded*]  
I mean, of course, you are continually christening, aren't you?

*Miss Prism* It is, I regret to say, one of the Rector's most constant duties in this parish I have often spoken to the poorer

classes on the subject But they don't seem to know what thrift is

*Chasuble* But is there any particular infant in whom you are interested, Mr Worthing? Your brother was, I believe, unmarried, was he not?

*Jack* Oh, yes

*Miss Prism* [bitterly] People who live entirely for pleasure usually are

*Jack* But it is not for any child, dear Doctor I am very fond of children No! the fact is, I would like to be christened myself, this afternoon, if you have nothing better to do

*Chasuble* But surely, Mr Worthing, you have been christened already?

*Jack* I don't remember anything about it

*Chasuble* But have you any grave doubts on the subject?

*Jack* I certainly intend to have Of course, I don't know if the thing would bother you in any way, or if you think I am a little too old now

*Chasuble* Not at all The sprinkling, and, indeed, the immersion, of adults is a perfectly canonical practice

*Jack* Immersion!

*Chasuble* You need have no apprehensions Sprinkling is all that is necessary, or indeed, I think, advisable Our weather is so changeable At what hour would you wish the ceremony performed?

*Jack* Oh, I might trot around about five if that would suit you

*Chasuble* Perfectly, perfectly! In fact I have two similar ceremonies to perform at that time A case of twins that occurred recently in one of the outhing cottages on your own estate Poor Jenkins the carter, a most hard-working man

*Jack* Oh! I don't see much fun in being christened along with other babies It would be childish Would half-past five do?

*Chasuble* Admirably! Admirably! [*He takes out his watch*] And now, dear Mr Worthing, I will not intrude any longer into a house of sorrow I would merely beg you not to be too much bowed down by grief What seem to us bitter trials at the moment are often blessings in disguise

*Miss Prism* This seems to me a blessing of an extremely obvious kind

[*Cecily enters from the house*]

*Cecily* Uncle Jack! Oh, I am pleased to

see you back But what horrid clothes you have on! Do go and change them

*Miss Prism* Cecily!

*Chasuble* My child! my child!

[*CECILY goes towards JACK, he kisses her brow in a melancholy manner*]

*Cecily* What is the matter, Uncle Jack? Do look happy! You look as if you had a toothache, and I have such a surprise for you Who do you think is in the dining-room? Your brother!

*Jack* Who?

*Cecily* Your brother Ernest He arrived about half an hour ago

*Jack* What nonsense! I haven't got a brother

*Cecily* Oh, don't say that However badly he may have behaved to you in the past, he is still your brother You couldn't be so heartless as to disown him I'll tell him to come out And you will shake hands with him, won't you, Uncle Jack? [*She runs back into the house*]

*Chasuble* These are very joyful tidings

*Miss Prism* After we had all been resigned to his loss, his sudden return seems to me peculiarly distressing

*Jack* My brother is in the dining-room? I don't know what it all means I think it is perfectly absurd

[*ALGERNON and CECILY enter hand in hand They come slowly up to JACK*]

*Jack* Good heavens! [*He motions ALGERNON away*]

*Algernon* Brother John, I have come down from town to tell you that I am very sorry for all the trouble I have given you, and that I intend to lead a better life in the future

[*JACK glares at ALGERNON and does not take his hand*]

*Cecily* Uncle Jack, you are not going to refuse your own brother's hand?

*Jack* Nothing will induce me to take his hand I think his coming down here disgraceful He knows perfectly well why

*Cecily* Uncle Jack, do be nice There is some good in everyone Ernest has just been telling me about his poor invalid friend, Mr Bunbury, whom he goes to visit so often And surely there must be much good in one who is kind to an invalid, and leaves the pleasures of London to sit by a bed of pain

*Jack* Oh he has been talking about Bunbury, has he?

*Cecily* Yes, he has told me all about poor Mr Bunbury, and his terrible state of health

*Jack* Bunbury! Well, I won't have him talk to you about Bunbury or about anything else It is enough to drive one perfectly frantic

*Algernon* Of course I admit that the faults were all on my side But I must say that I think that Brother John's coldness to me is peculiarly painful I expected a more enthusiastic welcome, especially considering it is the first time I have come here

*Cecily* Uncle Jack, if you don't shake hands with Ernest, I will never forgive you

*Jack* Never forgive me?

*Cecily* Never, never, never!

*Jack* Well, this is the last time I shall ever do it [*He shakes hands with ALGERNON and glares*]

*Chasuble* It's pleasant, is it not, to see so perfect a reconciliation? I think we might leave the two brothers together

*Miss Prism* Cecily, you will come with us

*Cecily* Certainly, Miss Prism My little task of reconciliation is over

*Chasuble* You have done a beautiful action to-day, dear child

*Miss Prism* We must not be premature in our judgments

*Cecily* I feel very happy

[*CECILY, MISS PRISM, and DR CHASUBLE go*]

*Jack* You young scoundrel, Algy, you must get out of this place as soon as possible I don't allow any Bunburying here

[*MERRIMAN enters*]

*Merriman* I have put Mr Ernest's things in the room next to yours, sir I suppose that is all right?

*Jack* What?

*Merriman* Mr Ernest's luggage, sir I have unpacked it and put it in the room next to your own

*Jack* His luggage?

*Merriman* Yes, sir Three portmanteaus, a dressing-case, two hat-boxes, and a large luncheon-basket

*Algernon* I am afraid I can't stay more than a week this time

*Jack* Merriman, order the dog-cart at once Mr Ernest has been suddenly called back to town

*Merriman* Yes, sir [*He goes back into the house*]

*Algernon* What a fearful liar you are, Jack I have not been called back to town at all.

*Jack* Yes, you have

*Algernon* I haven't heard anyone call me

*Jack* Your duty as a gentleman calls you back

*Algernon* My duty as a gentleman has never interfered with my pleasures in the smallest degree

*Jack* I can quite understand that

*Algernon* Well, Cecily is a darling

*Jack* You are not to talk of Miss Cardew like that I don't like it

*Algernon* Well, I don't like your clothes You look perfectly ridiculous in them Why on earth don't you go up and change? It is perfectly childish to be in deep mourning for a man who is actually staying for a whole week with you in your house as a guest I call it grotesque

*Jack* You are certainly not staying with me for a whole week as a guest or anything else You have got to leave . by the four-five train

*Algernon* I certainly won't leave you so long as you are in mourning It would be most unfriendly If I were in mourning, you would stay with me, I suppose I should think it very unkind if you didn't

*Jack* Well, will you go if I change my clothes? ✓

*Algernon* Yes, if you are not too long I never saw anybody take so long to dress, and with such little result

*Jack* Well, at any rate, that is better than being always over-dressed as you are

*Algernon* If I am occasionally a little over-dressed, I make up for it by being always immensely over-educated

*Jack* Your vanity is ridiculous, your conduct an outrage, and your presence in my garden utterly absurd However, you have got to catch the four-five, and I hope you will have a pleasant journey back to town This Bunburying, as you call it, has not been a great success for you [*He goes into the house*]

*Algernon* I think it has been a great success I'm in love with Cecily, and that is everything

[*CECILY enters at the back of the garden She picks up the can and begins to water the flowers*]

But I must see her before I go, and make arrangements for another Bunbury Ah, there she is

*Cecily* Oh, I merely came back to water the roses I thought you were with Uncle Jack

*Algernon* He's gone to order the dog-cart for me

*Cecily* Oh, is he going to take you for a nice drive?

*Algernon* He's going to send me away

*Cecily* Then have we got to part?

*Algernon* I am afraid so It's a very painful parting

*Cecily* It is always painful to part from people whom one has known for a very brief space of time The absence of old friends one can endure with equanimity But even a momentary separation from anyone to whom one has just been introduced is almost unbearable

*Algernon* Thank you

[MERRIMAN enters]

*Merriman* The dog-cart is at the door, sir

[ALGERNON looks appealingly at CECILY]

*Cecily* It can wait, Merriman for five minutes

*Merriman* Yes, miss [He goes]

*Algernon* I hope, Cecily, I shall not offend you if I state quite frankly and openly that you seem to me to be in every way the visible personification of absolute perfection

*Cecily* I think your frankness does you great credit, Ernest If you will allow me, I will copy your remarks into my diary [She goes over to the table and begins writing in her diary]

*Algernon* Do you really keep a diary? I'd give anything to look at it May I?

*Cecily* Oh, no [She puts her hand over it] You see, it is simply a very young girl's record of her own thoughts and impressions, and consequently meant for publication When it appears in volume form, I hope you will order a copy But pray, Ernest, don't stop I delight in taking down from dictation I have reached "absolute perfection" You can go on I am quite ready for more

*Algernon* [somewhat taken aback] Ahem! Ahem!

*Cecily* Oh, don't cough, Ernest When one is dictating one should speak fluently and not cough Besides, I don't know how

to spell a cough [She writes as ALGERNON speaks]

*Algernon* [speaking very rapidly] Cecily, ever since I first looked upon your wonderful and incomparable beauty, I have dared to love you wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly

*Cecily* I don't think that you should tell me that you love me wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly Hopelessly doesn't seem to make much sense, does it?

*Algernon* Cecily! [MERRIMAN enters]

*Merriman* The dog-cart is waiting, sir.

*Algernon* Tell it to come round next week, at the same hour

[MERRIMAN looks at CECILY, who makes no sign]

*Merriman* Yes, sir [He retires]

*Cecily* Uncle Jack would be very much annoyed if he knew you were staying on till next week, at the same hour

*Algernon* Oh, I don't care about Jack I don't care for anybody in the whole world but you I love you, Cecily You will marry me, won't you?

*Cecily* You silly, you! Of course Why, we have been engaged for the last three months

*Algernon* For the last three months?

*Cecily* Yes, it will be exactly three months on Thursday

*Algernon* But how did we become engaged?

*Cecily* Well, ever since dear Uncle Jack first confessed to us that he had a younger brother who was very wicked and bad, you of course have formed the chief topic of conversation between myself and Miss Prism And of course a man who is much talked about is always very attractive One feels there must be something in him after all I daresay it was foolish of me, but I fell in love with you, Ernest

*Algernon* Darling! And when was the engagement actually settled?

*Cecily* On the 4th of February last Worn out by your entire ignorance of my existence, I determined to end the matter one way or the other, and after a long struggle with myself I accepted you under this dear old tree here The next day I bought this little ring in your name, and this is the little bangle with the true lovers' knot I promised you always to wear

*Algernon* Did I give you this? It's very pretty, isn't it?

*Cecily* Yes, you've wonderfully good taste, Ernest It's the excuse I've always given for your leading such a bad life And this is the box in which I keep all your dear letters [*She kneels at the table, opens the box, and produces letters tied up with blue ribbon*]

*Algernon* My letters! But my own sweet *Cecily*, I have never written you any letters

*Cecily* You need hardly remind me of that, Ernest I remember only too well that I was forced to write your letters for you I wrote always three times a week, and sometimes oftener

*Algernon* Oh, do let me read them, *Cecily*?

*Cecily* Oh, I couldn't possibly They would make you far too conceited [*She replaces the box*] The three you wrote me after I had broken off the engagement are so beautiful, and so badly spelled, that even now I can hardly read them without crying a little

*Algernon* But was our engagement ever broken off?

*Cecily* Of course it was On the 22nd of last March You can see the entry if you like [*She shows the diary*] "To-day I broke off my engagement with Ernest I feel it is better to do so The weather still continues charming"

*Algernon* But why on earth did you break it off? What had I done? I had done nothing at all *Cecily*, I am very much hurt indeed to hear you broke it off Particularly when the weather was so charming

*Cecily* It would hardly have been a really serious engagement if it hadn't been broken off at least once But I forgave you before the week was out

*Algernon* [*crossing to her, and kneeling*] What a perfect angel you are, *Cecily*

*Cecily* You dear romantic boy

[*He kisses her She puts her fingers through his hair*]

I hope your hair curls naturally, does it?

*Algernon* Yes, darling, with a little help from others

*Cecily* I am so glad

*Algernon* You'll never break off our engagement again, *Cecily*?

*Cecily* I don't think I could break it off now that I have actually met you Besides,

of course, there is the question of your name

*Algernon* Yes, of course [*nervously*]

*Cecily* You must not laugh at me, darling, but it had always been a girlish dream of mine to love some one whose name was Ernest

[*ALGERNON rises, CECILY also*] There is something in that name that seems to inspire absolute confidence I pity any poor married woman whose husband is not called Ernest

*Algernon* But, my dear child, do you mean to say you could not love me if I had some other name?

*Cecily* But what name?

*Algernon* Oh, any name you like—*Algernon*, for instance

*Cecily* But I don't like the name of *Algernon*

*Algernon* Well, my own dear, sweet, loving little darling, I really can't see why you should object to the name of *Algernon* It is not at all a bad name In fact, it is rather an aristocratic name Half of the chaps who get into the Bankruptcy Court are called *Algernon* But seriously, *Cecily*, [*Moving to her*] if my name was *Algy*, couldn't you love me?

*Cecily* [*rising*]. I might respect you, Ernest, I might admire your character, but I fear that I should not be able to give you my undivided attention

*Algernon* Ahem! [*Picking up his hat*] *Cecily*! Your Rector here is, I suppose, thoroughly experienced in the practice of all the rites and ceremonies of the church?

*Cecily* Oh, yes Dr Chasuble is a most learned man He has never written a single book, so you can imagine how much he knows

*Algernon* I must see him at once on a most important christening—I mean on most important business

*Cecily* Oh!

*Algernon* I shan't be away more than half an hour

*Cecily* Considering that we have been engaged since February the 14th, and that I only met you to-day for the first time, I think it is rather hard that you should leave me for so long a period as half an hour Couldn't you make it twenty minutes?

*Algernon* I'll be back in no time [*He kisses her and rushes down the garden*]

*Cecily* What an impetuous boy he is I



like his hair so much I must enter his proposal in my diary [MERRIMAN enters]

Merriman A Miss Fairfax has just called to see Mr Worthing On very important business, Miss Fairfax states

Cecily Isn't Mr Worthing in his library?

Merriman Mr Worthing went over in the direction of the Rectory some time ago

Cecily Pray ask the lady to come out here, Mr Worthing is sure to be back soon And you can bring tea

Merriman Yes, miss [He goes]

Cecily Miss Fairfax! I suppose one of the many good elderly women who are associated with Uncle Jack in some of his philanthropic work in London I don't quite like women who are interested in philanthropic work I think it is so forward of them [MERRIMAN enters]

Merriman Miss Fairfax

[GWENDOLEN enters MERRIMAN goes]

Cecily [advancing to meet her] Pray let me introduce myself to you My name is Cecily Cardew

Gwendolen Cecily Cardew? [Moving to her and shaking hands] What a very sweet name! Something tells me that we are going to be great friends I like you already more than I can say My first impressions of people are never wrong

Cecily How nice of you to like me so much after we have known each other such a comparatively short time Pray sit down

Gwendolen [still standing up] I may call you Cecily, may I not?

Cecily With pleasure!

Gwendolen And you will always call me Gwendolen, won't you?

Cecily If you wish

Gwendolen Then that is all quite settled, is it not?

Cecily I hope so

[There is a pause They sit down together]

Gwendolen Perhaps this might be a favorable opportunity for my mentioning who I am My father is Lord Bracknell You have never heard of papa, I suppose?

Cecily I don't think so

Gwendolen Outside the family circle, papa, I am glad to say, is entirely unknown I think that is quite as it should be The home seems to me to be the proper sphere for the man And certainly once a man begins to neglect his domestic duties, he becomes painfully effeminate, does he not?

And I don't like that It makes men so very attractive Cecily, mamma, whose views on education are remarkably strict, has brought me up to be extremely short-sighted, it is part of her system, so do you mind my looking at you through my glasses?

Cecily Oh, not at all, Gwendolen I am very fond of being looked at

Gwendolen [after examining CECILY carefully through a lorgnette] You are here on a short visit, I suppose

Cecily Oh, no, I live here

Gwendolen [severely] Really? Your mother, no doubt, or some female relative of advanced years, resides here also?

Cecily Oh, no I have no mother, nor, in fact, any relations

Gwendolen Indeed?

Cecily My dear guardian, with the assistance of Miss Prism, has the arduous task of looking after me

Gwendolen Your guardian?

Cecily Yes, I am Mr Worthing's ward

Gwendolen Oh! It is strange he never mentioned to me that he had a ward How secretive of him! He grows more interesting hourly I am not sure, however, that the news inspires me with feelings of unmixed delight [Rising and going to her] I am very fond of you, Cecily, I have liked you ever since I met you But I am bound to state that now that I know that you are Mr Worthing's ward, I cannot help expressing a wish you were—well, just a little older than you seem to be—and not quite so very alluring in appearance In fact, if I may speak candidly—

Cecily Pray do! I think that whenever one has anything unpleasant to say, one should always be quite candid

Gwendolen Well, to speak with perfect candour, Cecily, I wish that you were fully forty-two, and more than usually plain for your age Ernest has a strong upright nature He is the very soul of truth and honour Disloyalty would be as impossible to him as deception But even men of the noblest possible moral character are extremely susceptible to the influence of the physical charms of others Modern, no less than Ancient History, supplies us with many most painful examples of what I refer to If it were not so, indeed, History would be quite unreadable



*Cecily* I beg your pardon, Gwendolen, did you say Ernest?

*Gwendolen* Yes

*Cecily* Oh, but it is not Mr Ernest Worthing who is my guardian. It is his brother—his elder brother.

*Gwendolen* [*sitting down again*] Ernest never mentioned to me that he had a brother.

*Cecily* I am sorry to say they have not been on good terms for a long time.

*Gwendolen* Ah! that accounts for it. And now that I think of it, I have never heard any man mention his brother. The subject seems distasteful to most men. *Cecily*, you have lifted a load from my mind. I was growing almost anxious. It would have been terrible if any cloud had come across a friendship like ours, would it not? Of course you are quite, quite sure that it is not Mr Ernest Worthing who is your guardian?

*Cecily* Quite sure. [*After a pause*] In fact, I am going to be his.

*Gwendolen* [*inquiringly*] I beg your pardon?

*Cecily* [*rather shy and confidently*] Dearest Gwendolen, there is no reason why I should make a secret of it to you. Our little county newspaper is sure to chronicle the fact next week. Mr Ernest Worthing and I are engaged to be married.

*Gwendolen* [*quite politely, rising*] My darling *Cecily*, I think there must be some slight error. Mr Ernest Worthing is engaged to me. The announcement will appear in the *Morning Post* on Saturday at the latest.

*Cecily* [*very politely, rising*] I am afraid you must be under some misconception. Ernest proposed to me exactly ten minutes ago. [*She shows her diary*]

*Gwendolen* [*examining the diary through her lorgnette carefully*] It is certainly very curious, for he asked me to be his wife yesterday afternoon at 5.30. If you would care to verify the incident, pray do so. [*She produces a diary of her own*] I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train. I am so sorry, dear *Cecily*, if it is any disappointment to you, but I am afraid I have the prior claim.

*Cecily* It would distress me more than I can tell you, dear Gwendolen, if it caused you any mental or physical anguish, but I feel bound to point out that since Ernest

proposed to you he clearly has changed his mind.

*Gwendolen* [*meditatively*] If the poor fellow has been entrapped into any foolish promise, I shall consider it my duty to rescue him at once, and with a firm hand.

*Cecily* [*thoughtfully and sadly*] Whatever unfortunate entanglement my dear boy may have got into, I will never reproach him with it after we are married.

*Gwendolen* Do you allude to me, Miss Cardew, as an entanglement? You are presumptuous. On an occasion of this kind it becomes more than a moral duty to speak one's mind. It becomes a pleasure.

*Cecily* Do you suggest, Miss Fairfax, that I entrapped Ernest into an engagement? How dare you? This is no time for wearing the shallow mask of manners. When I see a spade, I call it a spade.

*Gwendolen* [*satirically*] I am glad to say that I have never seen a spade. It is obvious that our social spheres have been widely different.

[*MERRIMAN enters, followed by the footman. He carries a salver, tablecloth, and plate-stand. CECILY is about to retort. The presence of the servants exercises a restraining influence, under which both girls chafe.*]

*Merriman*. Shall I lay tea here as usual, miss?

*Cecily* [*sternly, in a calm voice*] Yes, as usual.

[*MERRIMAN begins to clear and lay the cloth. There is a long pause. CECILY and GWENDOLEN glare at each other.*]

*Gwendolen* Are there many interesting walks in the vicinity, Miss Cardew?

*Cecily* Oh, yes, a great many. From the top of one of the hills quite close one can see five counties.

*Gwendolen* Five counties! I don't think I should like that. I hate crowds.

*Cecily* [*sweetly*] I suppose that is why you live in town?

[*GWENDOLEN bites her lip, and beats her foot nervously with her parasol.*]

*Gwendolen* [*looking round*] Quite a well-kept garden this is, Miss Cardew.

*Cecily* So glad you like it, Miss Fairfax.

*Gwendolen* I had no idea there were any flowers in the country.

*Cecily* Oh, flowers are as common here. Miss Fairfax, as people are in London.

Gwendolen Personally I cannot understand how anybody manages to exist in the country, if anybody who is anybody does. The country always bores me to death.

Cecily Ah! This is what the newspapers call agricultural depression, is it not? I believe the aristocracy are suffering very much from it just at present. It is almost an epidemic amongst them, I have been told. May I offer you some tea, Miss Fairfax?

Gwendolen [with elaborate politeness] Thank you [Aside] Detestable girl! But I require tea!

Cecily [sweetly] Sugar?

Gwendolen [superciliously] No, thank you. Sugar is not fashionable any more.

[CECILY looks angrily at her, takes up the tongs, and puts four lumps of sugar into the cup]

Cecily [severely] Cake or bread and butter?

Gwendolen [in a bored manner] Bread and butter, please. Cake is rarely seen at the best houses nowadays.

[CECILY cuts a large slice of cake and puts it on the tray]

Cecily [to MERRIMAN] Hand that to Miss Fairfax.

[MERRIMAN does so, and goes out with the footman. GWENDOLEN drinks the tea and makes a grimace. She puts down the cup at once, reaches out her hand to the bread and butter, looks at it, and finds it cake. She rises in indignation.]

Gwendolen You have filled my tea with lumps of sugar, and though I asked most distinctly for bread and butter, you have given me cake. I am known for the gentleness of my disposition, and the extraordinary sweetness of my nature, but I warn you, Miss Cardew, you may go too far.

Cecily [rising] To save my poor, innocent, trusting boy from the machinations of any other girl there are no lengths to which I would not go.

Gwendolen From the moment I saw you I distrusted you. I felt that you were false and deceitful. I am never deceived in such matters. My first impressions of people are invariably right.

Cecily It seems to me, Miss Fairfax, that I am trespassing on your valuable time. No doubt you have many other calls of a

similar character to make in the neighbourhood. [JACK enters]

Gwendolen [catching sight of him] Ernest! My own Ernest!

Jack Gwendolen! Darling! [He offers to kiss her]

Gwendolen [drawing back] A moment! May I ask if you are engaged to be married to this young lady? [She points to CECILY]

Jack [laughing] To dear little Cecily! Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

Gwendolen Thank you. You may [She offers her cheek]

Cecily [very sweetly] I knew there must be some misunderstanding, Miss Fairfax. The gentleman whose arm is at present around your waist is my dear guardian, Mr John Worthing.

Gwendolen I beg your pardon?

Cecily This is Uncle Jack.

Gwendolen [receding] Jack! Oh,

[ALGERNON enters]

Cecily Here is Ernest.

[ALGERNON goes straight over to CECILY without noticing anyone else]

Algernon My own love! [He offers to kiss her]

Cecily [drawing back] A moment, Ernest! May I ask you—are you engaged to be married to this young lady?

Algernon [looking round] To what young lady? Good heavens! Gwendolen!

Cecily Yes, to good heavens, Gwendolen,—I mean to Gwendolen.

Algernon [laughing] Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

Cecily Thank you [Presenting her cheek to be kissed] You may

[ALGERNON kisses her]

Gwendolen I felt there was some slight error, Miss Cardew. The gentleman who is now embracing you is my cousin, Mr Algernon Moncrieff.

Cecily [breaking away from ALGERNON] Algernon Moncrieff! Oh!

[The two girls move towards each other and put their arms round each other's waists as if for protection]

Cecily Are you called Algernon?

Algernon I cannot deny it.

Cecily Oh!

Gwendolen Is your name really John?

Jack [standing rather proudly] I could

deny it if I liked I could deny anything if I liked But my name certainly is John It has been John for years

*Cecily* [to GWENDOLEN] A gross deception has been practised on both of us

*Gwendolen* My poor wounded Cecily!

*Cecily* My sweet, wronged Gwendolen!

*Gwendolen* [slowly and seriously] You will call me sister, will you not?

[GWENDOLEN and CECILY embrace

JACK and ALGERNON groan and walk up and down]

*Cecily* [rather brightly] There is just one question I would like to be allowed to ask my guardian

*Gwendolen* An admirable idea! Mr Worthing, there is just one question I would like to be permitted to put to you Where is your brother Ernest? We are both engaged to be married to your brother Ernest, so it is a matter of some importance to us to know where your brother Ernest is at present

*Jack* [slowly and hesitatingly] Gwendolen—Cecily—it is very painful for me to be forced to speak the truth It is the first time in my life that I have ever been reduced to such a painful position, and I am really quite inexperienced in doing anything of the kind However, I will tell you quite frankly that I have no brother Ernest I have no brother at all I never had a brother in my life, and I certainly have not the smallest intention of ever having one in the future

*Cecily* [surprised] No brother at all?

*Jack* [cheerily] None!

*Gwendolen* [severely] Had you never a brother of any kind?

*Jack* [pleasantly] Never Not even of any kind

*Gwendolen* I am afraid it is quite clear, Cecily, that neither of us is engaged to be married to anyone

*Cecily* It is not a very pleasant position for a young girl suddenly to find herself in Is it?

*Gwendolen* Let us go into the house They will hardly venture to come after us there

*Cecily* No, men are so cowardly, aren't they?

[CECILY and GWENDOLEN retire into the house with scornful looks]

*Jack* This ghastly state of things is what you call Bunburying, I suppose?

*Algernon* Yes, and a perfectly wonderful Bunbury it is The most wonderful Bunbury I have ever had in my life

*Jack* Well, you've no right whatsoever to Bunbury here

*Algernon* That is absurd One has a right to Bunbury anywhere one chooses Every serious Bunburyist knows that

*Jack* Serious Bunburyist! Good heavens!

*Algernon* Well, one must be serious about something, if one wants to have any amusement in life I happen to be serious about Bunburying What on earth you are serious about I haven't got the remotest idea About everything, I should fancy You have such an absolute trivial nature

*Jack* Well, the only small satisfaction I have in the whole of this wretched business is that your friend Bunbury is quite exploded You won't be able to run down to the country quite so often as you used to do, dear Algy And a very good thing, too

*Algernon* Your brother is a little off colour, isn't he, dear Jack? You won't be able to disappear to London quite so frequently as your wicked custom was And not a bad thing, either

*Jack* As for your conduct towards Miss Cardew, I must say that your taking in a sweet, simple, innocent girl like that is quite inexcusable To say nothing of the fact that she is my ward

*Algernon* I can see no possible defence at all for your deceiving a brilliant, clever, thoroughly experienced young lady like Miss Fairfax To say nothing of the fact that she is my cousin

*Jack* I wanted to be engaged to Gwendolen, that is all I love her

*Algernon* Well, I simply wanted to be engaged to Cecily I adore her

*Jack* There is certainly no chance of your marrying Miss Cardew

*Algernon* I don't think there is much likelihood, Jack, of you and Miss Fairfax being united

*Jack* Well, that is no business of yours

*Algernon* If it was my business, I wouldn't talk about it [He begins to eat muffins] It is very vulgar to talk about one's business Only people like stock-brokers do that, and then merely at dinner parties

*Jack* How you can sit there, calmly eating muffins, when we are in this horrible

trouble, I can't make out You seem to me to be perfectly heartless

*Algernon* Well, I can't eat muffins in an agitated manner The butter would probably get on my cuffs One should always eat muffins quite calmly It is the only way to eat them

*Jack* I say it's perfectly heartless your eating muffins at all, under the circumstances

*Algernon* When I am in trouble, eating is the only thing that consoles me Indeed, when I am in really great trouble, as anyone who knows me intimately will tell you, I refuse everything except food and drink At the present moment I am eating muffins because I am unhappy Besides, I am particularly fond of muffins [*rising*]

*Jack* [*rising*] Well, that is no reason why you should eat them all in that greedy way [*He takes the muffins from ALGERNON*]

*Algernon* [*offering tea-cake*] I wish you would have tea-cake instead I don't like tea-cake

*Jack* Good heavens! I suppose a man may eat his own muffins in his own garden

*Algernon* But you have just said it was perfectly heartless to eat muffins

*Jack* I said it was perfectly heartless of you, under the circumstances That is a very different thing

*Algernon* That may be But the muffins are the same [*He seizes the muffin-dish from JACK*]

*Jack* Algy, I wish to goodness you would go

*Algernon* You can't possibly ask me to go without having some dinner It's absurd I never go without my dinner No one ever does, except vegetarians and people like that Besides I have just made arrangements with Dr Chasuble to be christened at a quarter to six under the name of Ernest

*Jack* My dear fellow, the sooner you give up that nonsense the better I made arrangements this morning with Dr Chasuble to be christened myself at 5.30, and I naturally will take the name of Ernest Gwendolen would wish it We can't both be christened Ernest It's absurd Besides, I have a perfect right to be christened if I like There is no evidence at all that I ever have been christened by anybody I should think it extremely probable I never was, and so does Dr Chasuble It is entirely dif-

ferent in your case You have been christened already

*Algernon* Yes, but I have not been christened for years

*Jack* Yes, but you have been christened That is the important thing

*Algernon* Quite so So I know my constitution can stand it If you are not quite sure about your ever having been christened, I must say I think it rather dangerous your venturing on it now It might make you very unwell You can hardly have forgotten that someone very closely connected with you was very nearly carried off this week in Paris by a severe chill

*Jack* Yes, but you said yourself that a severe chill was not hereditary

*Algernon* It usedn't to be, I know—but I daresay it is now Science is always making wonderful improvements in things

*Jack* [*picking up the muffin-dish*] Oh, that is nonsense, you are always talking nonsense

*Algernon* Jack, you are at the muffins again! I wish you wouldn't There are only two left [*He takes them*] I told you I was particularly fond of muffins

*Jack* But I hate tea-cake

*Algernon* Why on earth, then, do you allow tea-cake to be served up for your guests? What ideas you have of hospitality!

*Jack* Algernon! I have already told you to go I don't want you here Why don't you go?

*Algernon* I haven't quite finished my tea yet, and there is still one muffin left

[*JACK groans, and sinks into a chair*  
*ALGERNON still continues eating*]

### ACT THREE

*The drawing-room at the Manor House*  
*GWENDOLEN and CECILY are at the window, looking out into the garden*

*Gwendolen* The fact that they did not follow us at once into the house, as anyone else would have done, seems to me to show that they have some sense of shame left

*Cecily* They have been eating muffins That looks like repentance

*Gwendolen* [*after a pause*] They don't seem to notice us at all Couldn't you cough?

*Gwendolen* They're looking at us What effrontery!

*Cecily* They're approaching That's very forward of them

*Gwendolen* Let us preserve a dignified silence

*Cecily* Certainly It's the only thing to do now

[*JACK enters, followed by ALGERNON They whistle some dreadful popular air from a British opera*]

*Gwendolen* This dignified silence seems to produce an unpleasant effect

*Cecily* A most distasteful one

*Gwendolen* But we will not be the first to speak

*Cecily* Certainly not

*Gwendolen* Mr Worthing, I have something very particular to ask you Much depends on your reply

*Cecily* Gwendolen, your common sense is invaluable Mr Moncrieff, kindly answer me the following question Why did you pretend to be my guardian's brother?

*Algernon* In order that I might have an opportunity of meeting you

*Cecily* [*to GWENDOLEN*] That certainly seems a satisfactory explanation, does it not?

*Gwendolen* Yes, dear, if you can believe him

*Cecily* I don't But that does not affect the wonderful beauty of his answer

*Gwendolen* True In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing Mr Worthing, what explanation can you offer to me for pretending to have a brother? Was it in order that you might have an opportunity of coming up to town to see me as often as possible?

*Jack* Can you doubt it, Miss Fairfax?

*Gwendolen* I have the gravest doubts upon the subject But I intend to crush them This is not the moment for German scepticism [*Moving to CECILY*] Their explanations appear to be quite satisfactory, especially Mr Worthing's That seems to me to have the stamp of truth upon it

*Cecily* I am more than content with what Mr Moncrieff said His voice alone inspires one with absolute credulity

*Gwendolen* Then you think we should forgive them?

*Cecily* Yes—I mean No

*Gwendolen* True! I had forgotten There are principles at stake that one cannot surrender Which of us should tell them? The task is not a pleasant one.

*Cecily* Could we not both speak at the same time?

*Gwendolen* An excellent idea! I nearly always speak at the same time as other people Will you take the time from me?

*Cecily* Certainly

[*GWENDOLEN beats time with uplifted finger*]

*Gwendolen and Cecily* [*speaking together*] Your Christian names are still an insuperable barrier That is all!

*Jack and Algernon* [*speaking together*] Our Christian names! Is that all? But we are going to be christened this afternoon

*Gwendolen* [*to JACK*] For my sake you are prepared to do this terrible thing?

*Jack* I am

*Cecily* [*to ALGERNON*] To please me you are ready to face this fearful ordeal?

*Algernon* I am!

*Gwendolen* How absurd to talk of the equality of the sexes! Where questions of self-sacrifice are concerned, men are infinitely beyond us

*Jack* We are [*He clasps hands with ALGERNON*]

*Cecily* They have moments of physical courage of which we women know absolutely nothing

*Gwendolen* [*to JACK*] Darling!

*Algernon* [*to CECILY*] Darling!

[*JACK and GWENDOLEN fall into each other's arms ALGERNON and CECILY fall into each other's arms*]

[*MERRIMAN enters He coughs loudly, seeing the situation*]

*Merriman* Ahem! Ahem! Lady Bracknell!

*Jack* Good heavens!

[*LADY BRACKNELL enters The couples separate in alarm MERRIMAN goes out*]

*Lady Bracknell.* Gwendolen! What does this mean?

*Gwendolen* Merely that I am engaged to be married to Mr Worthing, Mamma

*Lady Bracknell* Come here Sit down Sit down immediately Hesitation of any kind is a sign of mental decay in the young, of physical weakness in the old [*She turns to JACK*] Apprised, sir, of my daughter's sudden flight by her trusty maid, whose confidence I purchased by means of a small coin, I followed her at once by a luggage train Her unhappy father is, I am glad to say, under the impression that she is at-

tending a more than usually lengthy lecture by the University Extension Scheme on the Influence of a Permanent Income on Thought I do not propose to undecieve him. Indeed I have never undecieved him on any question I would consider it wrong. But of course, you will clearly understand that all communication between yourself and my daughter must cease immediately from this moment. On this point, as indeed on all points, I am firm.

*Jack* I am engaged to be married to Gwendolen, Lady Bracknell!

*Lady Bracknell* You are nothing of the kind, sir. And now, as regards Algernon! Algernon!

*Algernon* Yes, Aunt Augusta.

*Lady Bracknell* May I ask if it is in this house that your invalid friend Mr Bunbury resides?

*Algernon* [stammering] Oh, no! Bunbury doesn't live here. Bunbury is somewhere else at present. In fact, Bunbury is dead.

*Lady Bracknell* Dead! When did Mr Bunbury die? His death must have been extremely sudden.

*Algernon* [avily] Oh, I killed Bunbury this afternoon. I mean poor Bunbury died this afternoon.

*Lady Bracknell* What did he die of?

*Algernon* Bunbury? Oh, he was quite exploded.

*Lady Bracknell* Exploded! Was he the victim of a revolutionary outrage? I was not aware that Mr Bunbury was interested in social legislation. If so, he is well punished for his morbidity.

*Algernon* My dear Aunt Augusta, I mean he was found out! The doctors found out that Bunbury could not live, that is what I mean—so Bunbury died.

*Lady Bracknell* He seems to have had great confidence in the opinion of his physicians. I am glad, however, that he made up his mind at the last to some definite course of action, and acted under proper medical advice. And now that we have finally got rid of this Mr Bunbury, may I ask, Mr Worthing, who is that young person whose hand my nephew Algernon is now holding in what seems to me a peculiarly unnecessary manner?

*Jack* That lady is Miss Cecily Cardew, my ward.

[LADY BRACKNELL bows coldly to CECILY]

*Algernon* I am engaged to be married to Cecily, Aunt Augusta.

*Lady Bracknell* I beg your pardon?

*Cecily* Mr Montcrieff and I are engaged to be married, Lady Bracknell.

*Lady Bracknell* [with a shiver, crossing to the sofa and sitting down] I do not know whether there is anything peculiarly exciting in the air of this particular part of Hertfordshire, but the number of engagements that go on seems to me considerably above the proper average that statistics have laid down for our guidance. I think some preliminary inquiry on my part would not be out of place. Mr Worthing, is Miss Cardew at all connected with any of the larger railway stations in London? I merely desire information. Until yesterday I had no idea that there were any families or persons whose origin was a Terminus.

[JACK looks perfectly furious, but restrains himself]

*Jack* [in a clear, cold voice] Miss Cardew is the granddaughter of the late Mr Thomas Cardew of 149, Belgrave Square, S.W., Gervase Park, Dorking, Surrey, and the Sporrin, Fifeshire, N.B.

*Lady Bracknell* That sounds not unsatisfactory. Three addresses always inspire confidence, even in tradesmen. But what proof have I of their authenticity?

*Jack* I have carefully preserved the Court Guide of the period. They are open to your inspection, Lady Bracknell.

*Lady Bracknell* [grimly] I have known strange errors in that publication.

*Jack* Miss Cardew's family solicitors are Messrs Markby, Markby, and Markby.

*Lady Bracknell* Markby, Markby, and Markby? A firm of the very highest position in their profession. Indeed I am told that one of the Mr Markby's is occasionally to be seen at dinner parties. So far I am satisfied.

*Jack* [very irritably] How extremely kind of you, Lady Bracknell! I have also in my possession, you will be pleased to hear, certificates of Miss Cardew's birth, baptism, whooping cough, registration, vaccination, confirmation, and the measles—both the German and the English variety.

*Lady Bracknell* Ah! A life crowded with incident, I see, though perhaps somewhat too exciting for a young girl. I am not myself in favour of premature experiences. [She rises, looks at her watch] Gwendolen!



the time approaches for our departure We have not a moment to lose As a matter of form, Mr Worthing, I had better ask you if Miss Cardew has any little fortune?

*Jack* Oh, about a hundred and thirty thousand pounds in the Funds That is all Good-bye, Lady Bracknell. So pleased to have seen you

*Lady Bracknell* [*sitting down again*] A moment, Mr Worthing A hundred and thirty thousand pounds! And in the Funds! Miss Cardew seems to me a most attractive young lady, now that I look at her Few girls of the present day have any really solid qualities, any of the qualities that last, and improve with time We live, I regret to say, in an age of surfaces [*To CECILY*] Come over here, dear

[*CECILY goes across*] Pretty child! your dress is sadly simple, and your hair seems almost as Nature might have left it But we can soon alter all that A thoroughly experienced French maid produces a really marvellous result in a very brief space of time I remember recommending one to young Lady Lancing, and after three months her own husband did not know her.

*Jack* [*aside*]. And after six months nobody knew her

[*LADY BRACKNELL glares at JACK for a few moments, then she bends, with a practised smile, to CECILY*]

*Lady Bracknell* Kindly turn round, sweet child

[*CECILY turns completely round*] No, the side view is what I want

[*CECILY presents her profile*] Yes, quite as I expected There are distinct social possibilities in your profile The two weak points in our age are its want of principle and its want of profile The chin a little higher, dear Style largely depends on the way the chin is worn They are worn very high, just at present Algernon!

*Algernon* Yes, Aunt Augusta!

*Lady Bracknell* There are distinct social possibilities in Miss Cardew's profile

*Algernon* Cecily is the sweetest, dearest, prettiest girl in the whole world And I don't care twopence about social possibilities

*Lady Bracknell* Never speak disrespectfully of society, Algernon Only people who can't get into it do that [*To CECILY*] Dear child, of course you know that Algernon

has nothing but his debts to depend upon But I do not approve of mercenary marriages When I married Lord Bracknell, I had no fortune of any kind But I never dreamed for a moment of allowing that to stand in my way Well, I suppose I must give my consent

*Algernon* Thank you, Aunt Augusta

*Lady Bracknell* Cecily, you may kiss me!

*Cecily* [*kissing her*]. Thank you, Lady Bracknell

*Lady Bracknell* You may also address me as Aunt Augusta for the future.

*Cecily* Thank you, Aunt Augusta

*Lady Bracknell* The marriage, I think, had better take place quite soon

*Algernon* Thank you, Aunt Augusta

*Cecily* Thank you, Aunt Augusta

*Lady Bracknell* To speak frankly, I am not in favour of long engagements They give people the opportunity of finding out each other's character before marriage, which I think is never advisable

*Jack* I beg your pardon for interrupting you, Lady Bracknell, but this engagement is quite out of the question I am Miss Cardew's guardian, and she cannot marry without my consent until she comes of age That consent I absolutely decline to give

*Lady Bracknell* Upon what grounds, may I ask? Algernon is an extremely, I may almost say an ostentatiously, eligible young man He has nothing, but he looks everything What more can one desire?

*Jack* It pains me very much to have to speak frankly to you, Lady Bracknell, about your nephew, but the fact is that I do not approve at all of his moral character I suspect him of being untruthful

[*ALGERNON and CECILY look at him in indignant amazement*]

*Lady Bracknell* Untruthful! My nephew Algernon? Impossible! He is an Oxonian

*Jack* I fear there can be no possible doubt about the matter This afternoon, during my temporary absence in London on an important question of romance, he obtained admission to my house by means of the false pretence of being my brother Under an assumed name he drank, I've just been informed by my butler, an entire pint bottle of my Perrier-Jouet, Brut, '89, a wine I was specially reserving for myself Continuing his disgraceful deception, he succeeded in the course of the afternoon in alienating the affections of my only ward

He subsequently stayed to tea, and devoured every single muffin. And what makes his conduct all the more heartless is, that he was perfectly well aware from the first that I have no brother, that I never had a brother, and that I don't intend to have a brother, not even of any kind. I distinctly told him so myself yesterday afternoon.

*Lady Bracknell* Ahem! Mr Worthing, after careful consideration I have decided entirely to overlook my nephew's conduct to you.

*Jack* That is very generous of you, Lady Bracknell. My own decision, however, is unalterable. I decline to give my consent.

*Lady Bracknell* [to *Cecily*] Come here, sweet child. [*Cecily goes over*] How old are you, dear?

*Cecily* Well, I am really only eighteen, but I always admit to twenty when I go to evening parties.

*Lady Bracknell* You are perfectly right in making some slight alteration. Indeed, no woman should ever be quite accurate about her age. It looks so calculating. [*In a meditative manner*] Eighteen, but admitting to twenty at evening parties. Well, it will not be very long before you are of age and free from the restraints of tutelage. So I don't think your guardian's consent is, after all, a matter of any importance.

*Jack* Pray excuse me, Lady Bracknell, for interrupting you again, but it is only fair to tell you that according to the terms of her grandfather's will Miss Cardew does not come legally of age till she is thirty-five.

*Lady Bracknell* That does not seem to me to be a grave objection. Thirty-five is a very attractive age. London society is full of women of the very highest birth who have, of their own free choice, remained thirty-five for years. Lady Dumbleton is an instance in point. To my own knowledge she has been thirty-five ever since she arrived at the age of forty, which was many years ago now. I see no reason why our dear Cecily should not be even still more attractive at the age you mention than she is at present. There will be a large accumulation of property.

*Cecily* Algy, could you wait for me till I was thirty-five?

*Algernon* Of course I could, Cecily. You know I could.

*Cecily* Yes, I felt it instinctively, but I couldn't wait all that time. I hate waiting even five minutes for anybody. It always makes me rather cross. I am not punctual myself, I know, but I do like punctuality in others, and waiting even to be married, is quite out of the question.

*Algernon* Then what is to be done, Cecily?

*Cecily* I don't know, Mr Moncrieff.

*Lady Bracknell* My dear Mr Worthing, as Miss Cardew states positively that she cannot wait till she is thirty-five—a remark which I am bound to say seems to me to show a somewhat impetuous nature—I would beg of you to reconsider your decision.

*Jack* But my dear Lady Bracknell, the matter is entirely in your own hands. The moment you consent to my marriage with Gwendolen, I will most gladly allow your nephew to form an alliance with my ward.

*Lady Bracknell* [*rising and drawing herself up*] You must be quite aware that what you propose is out of the question.

*Jack* Then a passionate celibacy is all that any of us can look forward to.

*Lady Bracknell* That is not the destiny I propose for Gwendolen. Algernon, of course, can choose for himself. [*She pulls out her watch*] Come, dear [to *Gwendolen*], we have already missed five, if not six, trains. To miss any more might expose us to comment on the platform.

[*Gwendolen rises* DR CHASUBLE enters.]

*Chasuble* Everything is quite ready for the christenings.

*Lady Bracknell* The christenings, sir! Is not that somewhat premature?

*Chasuble* [*looking rather puzzled, and pointing to Jack and Algernon*] Both these gentlemen have expressed a desire for immediate baptism.

*Lady Bracknell* At their age? The idea is grotesque and irreligious! Algernon, I forbid you to be baptised. I will not hear of such excesses. Lord Bracknell would be highly displeased if he learned that that was the way in which you wasted your time and money.

*Chasuble* Am I to understand then that there are to be no christenings at all this afternoon?

*Jack* I don't think that, as things are now, it would be of much practical value to either of us, Dr Chasuble.



*Chasuble* I am grieved to hear such sentiments from you, Mr Worthing. They savour of the heretical views of the Anabaptists, views that I have completely refuted in four of my unpublished sermons. However, as your present mood seems to be one peculiarly secular, I will return to the church at once. Indeed, I have just been informed by the pew-opener that for the last hour and a half Miss Prism has been waiting for me in the vestry.

*Lady Bracknell* [starting] Miss Prism! Did I hear you mention a Miss Prism?

*Chasuble* Yes, Lady Bracknell. I am on my way to join her.

*Lady Bracknell* Pray allow me to detain you for a moment. This matter may prove to be one of vital importance to Lord Bracknell and myself. Is this Miss Prism a female of repellent aspect, remotely connected with education?

*Chasuble* [somewhat indignantly] She is the most cultivated of ladies, and the very picture of respectability.

*Lady Bracknell* It is obviously the same person. May I ask what position she holds in your household?

*Chasuble* [severely]. I am a celibate, madam.

*Jack* [interposing]. Miss Prism, Lady Bracknell, has been for the last three years Miss Cardew's esteemed governess and valued companion.

*Lady Bracknell* In spite of what I hear of her, I must see her at once. Let her be sent for.

*Chasuble* [looking off] She approaches, she is nigh.

[MISS PRISM enters hurriedly]

*Miss Prism* I was told you expected me in the vestry, dear Canon. I have been waiting for you there for an hour and three-quarters.

[She catches sight of LADY BRACKNELL, who has fixed her with a stony stare. She grows pale and quails. She looks anxiously round as if desirous to escape.]

*Lady Bracknell* [in a severe, judicial voice] Prism!

[MISS PRISM bows her head in shame.] Come here, Prism!

[MISS PRISM approaches in a humble manner.]

Prism, where is that baby?

[General consternation. The Canon

*starts back in horror. ALGERNON and JACK pretend to be anxious to shield CECILY and GWENDOLEN from hearing the details of a terrible public scandal.]*

Twenty-eight years ago, Prism, you left Lord Bracknell's house, Number 104, Upper Grosvenor Street, in charge of a perambulator that contained a baby, of the male sex. You never returned. A few weeks later, through the elaborate investigations of the Metropolitan police, the perambulator was discovered at midnight, standing by itself in a remote corner of Bayswater. It contained the manuscript of a three-volume novel of more than usually revolting sentimentality.

[MISS PRISM starts in involuntary indignation.]

But the baby was not there!

[Everyone looks at MISS PRISM.] Prism, where is that baby?

*Miss Prism* [after a pause] Lady Bracknell, I admit with shame that I do not know. I only wish I did. The plain facts of the case are these. On the morning of the day you mention, a day that is forever branded on my memory, I prepared as usual to take the baby out in its perambulator. I had also with me a somewhat old but capacious hand-bag in which I had intended to place the manuscript of a work of fiction that I had written during my few unoccupied hours. In a moment of mental abstraction, for which I never can forgive myself, I deposited the manuscript in the bassinette, and placed the baby in the hand-bag.

*Jack* [who has been listening attentively] But where did you deposit the hand-bag?

*Miss Prism* Do not ask me, Mr Worthing.

*Jack* Miss Prism, this is a matter of no small importance to me. I insist on knowing where you deposited the hand-bag that contained that infant.

*Miss Prism* I left it in the cloak-room of one of the larger railway stations in London.

*Jack* What railway station?

*Miss Prism* [quite crushed] Victoria. The Brighton line. [She sinks into a chair.]

*Jack* I must retire to my room for a moment. Gwendolen, wait here for me.

*Gwendolen* If you are not too long, I will wait here for you all my life.

[*JACK goes out in great excitement*]  
*Chasuble* What do you think this means, Lady Bracknell?

*Lady Bracknell* I dare not even suspect, Dr Chasuble I need hardly tell you that in families of high position strange coincidences are not supposed to occur They are hardly considered the thing

[*Noises are heard overhead as if someone was throwing trunks about Everybody looks up*]

*Cecily* Uncle Jack seems strangely agitated

*Chasuble* Your guardian has a very emotional nature

*Lady Bracknell* This noise is extremely unpleasant It sounds as if he was having an argument I dislike arguments of any kind They are always vulgar, and often convincing

*Chasuble* [*looking up*] It has stopped now

[*The noise is redoubled*]

*Lady Bracknell* I wish he would arrive at some conclusion

*Gwendolen* This suspense is terrible I hope it will last

[*JACK enters with a hand-bag of black leather in his hand*]

*Jack* [*rushing over to Miss Prism*] Is this the hand-bag, Miss Prism? Examine it carefully before you speak The happiness of more than one life depends on your answer

*Miss Prism* [*calmly*] It seems to be mine Yes, here is the injury it received through the upsetting of a Gower Street omnibus in younger and happier days Here is the stain on the lining caused by the explosion of a temperance beverage, an incident that occurred at Leamington And here, on the lock, are my initials I had forgotten that in an extravagant mood I had had them placed there The bag is undoubtedly mine I am delighted to have it so unexpectedly restored to me It has been a great inconvenience being without it all these years

*Jack* [*in a pathetic voice*] Miss Prism, more is restored to you than this hand-bag I was the baby you placed in it

*Miss Prism* [*amazed*] You?

*Jack* [*embracing her*] Yes mother!

*Miss Prism* [*recoiling in indignant astonishment*] Mr Worthing! I am unmarried!

*Jack* Unmarried! I do not deny that is a serious blow But after all, who has the

right to cast a stone against one who has suffered? Cannot repentance wipe out an act of folly? Why should there be one law for men and another for women? Mother, I forgive you [*He again tries to embrace her*]

*Miss Prism* [*still more indignant*] Mr Worthing, there is some error [*Pointing to Lady Bracknell*] There is the lady who can tell you who you really are

*Jack* [*after a pause*] Lady Bracknell, I hate to seem inquisitive, but would you kindly inform me who I am?

*Lady Bracknell* I am afraid that the news I have to give you will not altogether please you You are the son of my poor sister, Mrs Moncrieff, and consequently Algernon's elder brother

*Jack* Algernon's elder brother! Then I have a brother after all I knew I had a brother! I always said I had a brother! Cecily,—how could you have ever doubted that I had a brother? [*He seizes hold of ALGERNON*] Dr. Chasuble, my unfortunate brother Miss Prism, my unfortunate brother Gwendolen, my unfortunate brother Algernon, you young scoundrel, you will have to treat me with more respect in the future You have never behaved to me like a brother in all your life

*Algernon* Well, not till to-day, old boy, I admit I did my best, however, though I was out of practice

[*ALGERNON and JACK shake hands*]

*Gwendolen* [*to JACK*] My own! But what own are you? What is your Christian name, now that you have become someone else?

*Jack* Good heavens! I had quite forgotten that point Your decision on the subject of my name is irrevocable, I suppose?

*Gwendolen* I never change, except in my affections

*Cecily* What a noble nature you have, Gwendolen!

*Jack* Then the question had better be cleared up at once Aunt Augusta, a moment At the time when Miss Prism left me in the hand-bag, had I been christened already?

*Lady Bracknell* Every luxury that money could buy, including christening, had been lavished on you by your fond and doting parents

*Jack* Then I was christened! That is settled Now, what name was I given? Let me know the worst

*Lady Bracknell* Being the eldest son you were naturally christened after your father

*Jack* [irritably] Yes, but what was my father's Christian name?

*Lady Bracknell* [meditatively] I cannot at the present moment recall what the General's Christian name was But I have no doubt he had one He was eccentric, I admit But only in later years And that was the result of the Indian climate, and marriage, and indigestion, and other things of that kind

*Jack* Algy! Can't you recollect what our father's Christian name was?

*Algernon* My dear boy, we were never even on speaking terms He died before I was a year old

*Jack* His name would appear in the Army Lists of the period, I suppose, Aunt Augusta?

*Lady Bracknell* The General was essentially a man of peace, except in his domestic life But I have no doubt his name would appear in any military directory

*Jack* The Army Lists of the last forty years are here These delightful records should have been my constant study [*He rushes to the bookcase and tears the books out*] M Generals Mallam, Maxbohm, Magley—what ghastly names they have! Markby, Migsby, Mobbs, Moncrieff! Lieutenant 1840, Captain, Lieutenant-Colonel, Colonel, General 1869, Christian names,

*Ernest John* [*He puts the book very quietly down and speaks quite calmly*] I always told you, Gwendolen, my name was Ernest, didn't I? Well, it is Ernest after all I mean it naturally is Ernest

*Lady Bracknell* Yes, I remember that the General was called Ernest I knew I had some particular reason for disliking the name

*Gwendolen* Ernest! My own Ernest! I felt from the first that you could have no other name!

*Jack* Gwendolen, it is a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly that all his life he has been speaking nothing but the truth Can you forgive me?

*Gwendolen* I can For I feel that you are sure to change

*Jack* My own one!

*Chasuble* [*to Miss Prism*]. Laetitia! [*He embraces her*]

*Miss Prism* [*enthusiastically*] Frederick! At last!

*Algernon* Cecily! [*He embraces her*] At last!

*Jack* Gwendolen! [*He embraces her*] At last!

*Lady Bracknell* My nephew, you seem to be displaying signs of triviality

*Jack* On the contrary, Aunt Augusta, I've now realized for the first time in my life the vital Importance of Being Earnest!

THE END

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

By EDMOND ROSTAND

*Translated from the French by GERTRUDE HALL*

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## EDMOND ROSTAND AND HIS PLAYS

EDMOND ROSTAND, the author of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, was born in Marseilles in 1868. His first important play, *The Romancers*, was produced by the Comédie Française in 1894. In his two next plays Sarah Bernhardt acted the principal parts. He wrote *Cyrano de Bergerac* in order to provide a brilliant part for Coquelin. The first performance of *Cyrano* was an event in the theatre comparable to that of Victor Hugo's *Hernani* in 1830, and the play proved to be the greatest stage success of the age. *L'Aiglon*, Rostand's next play, was written for Bernhardt, who played the title rôle and who also took the principal part in *Chantecler* in 1910. After this Rostand wrote only two more plays. He died in 1918.

Rostand is a brilliant phenomenon, not at all characteristic of the modern French theatre. It is true that he was only one of several dramatists of his period who struggled to bring the drama back to poetry and romance, but none of these succeeded in his purpose, and only Rostand, although he too failed in his attempt, by sheer force of genius made himself significant. In French drama naturalism and realism were dominant, and plain prose was the vehicle. But all of Rostand's plays were composed in revolt against the current practice, a revolt not necessarily conscious, however, for Rostand is instinctively a poet and romancer, and was bound to be such in any age and no matter what the practice of the theatre. His plays are either concerned with the world of the past or with that of pure imagination, in any event, with a world of romance. He writes in verse, marvelously embroidered, astonishingly facile, and capable of many moods. But Rostand, though not representative of the French theatre of his own day, owes much to the theatre of the past to Shakespeare, to the dramatists of Italy, to his French predecessors, especially Victor Hugo, who taught him the technique of melodrama and furnished him with a basic model for his verse, and to Sardou, who taught him a variety of effective stage devices. His plots are not especially original, his situations are usually those of theatre tradition, his women, at least, are mere conventional figures. Upon such shortcomings certain French critics of Rostand, who refuse to rate him as highly as his foreign admirers think proper, are rather indignantly insistent. But Rostand's merits would seem on the whole to outweigh his defects. He has an imagination that can create a world of its own, a wealth of sympathy for his own characters, an almost infallible sense of the theatre, brilliant wit and penetrating satire; and a verse that is handled with superb brilliancy and ease.

The reasons for the overwhelming popularity of *Cyrano* are fairly obvious. It portrays the historical poet, dramatist, lover, and fighter of seventeenth-century France much as he actually was, and establishes an environment for him with the same kind of completeness that D'Annunzio shows in creating the atmosphere for his *Francesca da Rimini*. It tells a good story full of tense situations, sparkles with wit, contains much beauty of phrase, portrays a wide variety of emotions, and possesses an indefinable charm compounded of all its many pleasing qualities. French of the French though it be, it is yet universal in its appeal. It is certainly not representative of the theatre of its day, it established no school, it failed to stem the tide of prose and realism, and stands apart, a lonely and engaging phenomenon, but it remains the one French play of its period that has toured the theatres of the entire world and that has made the name of its hero familiar to millions outside of his native country.

*Cyrano* was performed first in 1897 at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin, in Paris. Its first production in America was by Richard Mansfield in New York in 1898. In 1899 Coquelin, who played the rôle of Cyrano, and Sarah Bernhardt, who played that of Roxane, brought the play to London, and to New York in the year following. Its subsequent career on the stage is known to all who follow the theatre. The most celebrated as well as most successful recent revival of *Cyrano* is that by Walter Hampden.

## CHARACTERS

CYRANO DE BERGERAC  
CHRISTIAN DE NEUVILLETTE  
COMTE DE GUICHE  
RAGUENEAU  
LE BRET  
CAPTAIN CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX  
LIGNIÈRE  
DE VALVERT  
MONTFLEURY  
BELLEROSE  
JODELET  
CUIGY  
BRISSAILLE  
A BORE  
A MOUSQUETAIRE  
OTHER MOUSQUETAIRE  
A SPANISH OFFICER  
A LIGHT-CAVALRY MAN  
A DOORKEEPER  
A BURGHER  
HIS SON  
A PICKPOCKET  
A SPECTATOR  
A WATCHMAN  
BERTRANDOU THE FIFER  
A CAPUCHIN  
TWO MUSICIANS  
SEVEN CADETS  
THREE MARQUISES  
POETS  
PASTRYCOOKS  
  
ROXANE  
SISTER MARTHA  
LISE  
THE SWEETMEAT VENDER  
MOTHER MARGARET  
THE DUENNA  
SISTER CLAIRE  
AN ACTRESS  
A SOUBRETTE  
A FLOWER-GIRL  
PAGES

*The crowd, bourgeois, marquises, mousquetaires, pickpockets, pastrycooks, poets, Gascony Cadets, players, fiddlers, pages, children, Spanish soldiers, spectators, précieuses, actresses, bourgeoises, nuns, etc*

*The action takes place in Paris and in Arras in the first half of the seventeenth century*

# CYRANO DE BERGERAC

## ACT ONE

### A PLAY AT THE HOTEL DE BOURGOGNE

*The great hall of the Hotel de Bourgogne, in 1640. A sort of tennis-court arranged and decorated for theatrical performances.*

*The hall is a long rectangle, seen obliquely, so that one side of it constitutes the background, which runs from the position of the front wing at the right, to the line of the furthest wing at the left, and forms an angle with the stage, which is equally seen obliquely.*

*This stage is furnished, on both sides, along the wings, with benches. The drop-curtain is composed of two tapestry hangings, which can be drawn apart. Above a harlequin cloak, the royal escutcheon. Broad steps lead from the raised platform of the stage into the house. On either side of these steps, the musicians' seats. A row of candles fills the office of footlights.*

*Two galleries run along the side, the lower one is divided into boxes. No seats in the pit, which is the stage proper. At the back of the pit, that is to say, at the right, in the front, a few seats raised like steps, one above the other, and, under a stairway which leads to the upper seats, and of which the lower end only is visible, a stand decked with small candelabra, jars full of flowers, flagons and glasses, dishes heaped with sweetmeats, etc.*

*In the centre of the background, under the box-tier, the entrance to the theatre, large door which half opens to let in the spectators. On the panels of this door, and in several corners, and above the sweetmeat stand, red playbills announcing LA CLORISE.*

*At the rise of the curtain, the house is nearly dark, and still empty. The chandeliers are let down in the middle of the pit, until time to light them.*

*The audience, arriving gradually. Cavaliers, burghers, lackeys, pages, fiddlers, etc.*

*A tumult of voices is heard beyond the door, enter brusquely a CAVALIER.*

*Doorkeeper [running in after him] Not so fast! Your fifteen pence!*

*Cavalier I come in admission free!*

*Doorkeeper And why?*

*Cavalier I belong to the king's light cavalry!*

*Doorkeeper [to another CAVALIER who has entered] You?*

*Second Cavalier I do not pay!*

*Doorkeeper But*

*Second Cavalier. I belong to the mousquetaires!*

*First Cavalier [to the SECOND] It does not begin before two. The floor is empty. Let us have a bout with foils.*

*[They fence with foils they have brought.]*

*A Lackey [entering] Pst! . . . Flanquin!*

*Other Lackey [arrived a moment before] Champagne?*

*First Lackey [taking a pack of cards from his doublet and showing it to SECOND LACKEY] Cards. Dice. [Sits down on the floor] Let us have a game.*

*Second Lackey [sitting down likewise] You rascal, willingly!*

*First Lackey [taking from his pocket a bit of candle which he lights and sticks on the floor] I prigged an eyeful of my master's light!*

*One of the Watch [to a FLOWER-GIRL, who comes forward] It is pleasant getting here before the lights. [Puts his arm around her waist.]*

*One of the Fencers [taking a thrust]. Hit!*

*One of the Gamblers Clubs!*

*The Watchman [pursuing the girl] A kiss!*

*The Flower-Girl We shall be seen!*

*The Watchman [drawing her into a dark corner] No, we shall not!*

*A Man [sitting down on the floor with others who have brought provisions] By coming early, you get a comfortable chance to eat.*

*A Burgher [leading his son] This should be a good place, my boy. Let us stay here.*



*Audience* Ah, Ragueneau!

*Lagnière* [to CHRISTIAN] Ragueneau, who keeps the great cook-shop

*Ragueneau* [attired like a pastrycook in his Sunday best, coming quickly toward LIGNIÈRE] Monsieur, have you seen Monsieur de Cyrano?

*Lagnière* [presenting RAGUENEAU to CHRISTIAN] The pastrycook of poets and of players!

*Ragueneau* [abashed]. Too much honor .

*Lagnière* No modesty! Mécénas!

*Ragueneau* It is true, those gentlemen are among my customers . . .

*Lagnière* Debtors! . . . A considerable poet himself

*Ragueneau* It has been said! . . .

*Lagnière* Daft on poetry! .

*Ragueneau* It is true that for an ode

*Lagnière* You are willing to give at any time a tart!

*Ragueneau* . . let A tart-let

*Lagnière* Kind soul, he tries to cheapen his charitable acts! And for a triolet were you not known to give ?

*Ragueneau* Rolls Just rolls

*Lagnière* [severely] Buttered! . . . And the play, you are fond of the play?

*Ragueneau* It is with me a passion!

*Lagnière* And you settle for your entrance fee with a pastry currency Come now, among ourselves, what did you have to give to-day for admittance here?

*Ragueneau* Four custards eighteen lady-fingers [He looks all around] Monsieur de Cyrano is not here I wonder at it.

*Lagnière* And why?

*Ragueneau* Montfleury is billed to play.

*Lagnière* So it is, indeed That ton of man will to-day entrance us in the part of Phœdo Phœdo! . . But what is that to Cyrano?

*Ragueneau* Have you not heard? He interdicted Montfleury, whom he has taken in aversion, from appearing for one month upon the stage

*Lagnière* [who is at his fourth glass]. Well?

*Ragueneau* Montfleury is billed to play

*Cugy* [who has drawn near with his companions] He cannot be prevented

*Ragueneau* He cannot? . Well, I am here to see!

*First Marquis* What is this Cyrano?

*Cugy* A crack-brain!

*Second Marquis* Of quality?

*Cugy* Enough for daily uses He is a cadet in the Guards [Pointing out a gentleman who is coming and going about the pit, as if in search of somebody] But his friend Le Bret can tell you [Calling] Le Bret! . . [LE BRET comes toward them.] You are looking for Bergerac?

*Le Bret* Yes I am uneasy

*Cugy* Is it not a fact that he is a most uncommon fellow?

*Le Bret* [affectionately] The most exquisite being he is that walks beneath the moon!

*Ragueneau* Poet!

*Cugy* Swordsman!

*Brissaille* Physicist!

*Le Bret* Musician!

*Lagnière* And what an extraordinary aspect he presents!

*Ragueneau* I will not go so far as to say that I believe our grave Philippe de Champagne will leave us a portrait of him, but, the bizarre, excessive, whimsical fellow that he is would certainly have furnished the late Jacques Callot with a type of madcap fighter for one of his masques Hat with triple feather, doublet with twice-triple skirt, cloak which his interminable rapier lifts up behind, with pomp, like the insolent tail of a cock, prouder than all the Artabans that Gascony ever bred, he goes about in his stiff Punchinello ruff, airing a nose Ah, gentlemen, what a nose is that! One cannot look upon such a specimen of the nasigera without exclaiming, "No! truly, the man exaggerates"

After that, one smiles, one says "He will take it off" . But Monsieur de Bergerac never takes it off at all

*Le Bret* [shaking his head] He wears it always and cuts down whoever breathes a syllable in comment

*Ragueneau* [proudly] His blade is half the shears of Fate!

*First Marquis* [shrugging his shoulders]. He will not come!

*Ragueneau* He will I wager you a chicken à la Ragueneau

*First Marquis* [laughing] Very well!

[Murmur of admiration in the house. ROXANE has appeared in

her box She takes a seat in the front, her duenna at the back  
CHRISTIAN, engaged in paying the SWEETMEAT VENDER, does not look]

Second Marquis [uttering a series of small squeals] Ah, gentlemen, she is horrifically enticing!

First Marquis A strawberry set in a peach, and smiling!

Second Marquis So fresh, that being near her, one might catch cold in his heart!

Christian [looks up, sees ROXANE, and, agitated, seizes LIGNIÈRE by the arm] That is she!

Lignière [looking] Ah, that is she!

Christian Yes Tell me at once Oh, I am afraid!

Lignière [sipping his wine slowly] Magdeleine Robin, surnamed Roxane Subtle Euphuistic

Christian Alack-a-day!

Lignière Unmarried An orphan A cousin of Cyrano's . . . the one of whom they were talking

[While he is speaking, a richly dressed nobleman, wearing the order of the Holy Ghost on a blue ribbon across his breast, enters ROXANE's box, and, without taking a seat, talks with her a moment]

Christian [starting] That man?

Lignière [who is beginning to be tipsy, winking] Hé! Hé! Comte de Guiche Enamored of her But married to the niece of Armand de Richelieu Wishes to manage a match between Roxane and certain sorry lord, one Monsieur de Valvert, vicomte and easy She does not subscribe to his views, but De Guiche is powerful he can persecute to some purpose a simple commoner But I have duly set forth his shady machinations in a song which Ho! he must bear me a grudge! The end was wicked Listen! [He rises, staggering, and lifting his glass, is about to sing]

Christian No Good-evening

Lignière You are going? . . .

Christian To find Monsieur de Valvert  
Lignière Have a care You are the one who will get killed [Indicating ROXANE by a glance] Stay Some one is looking

Christian It is true . . .

[He remains absorbed in the contemplation of ROXANE The pickpockets, seeing his abstracted air, draw nearer to him]

Lignière Ah, you are going to stay Well, I am going I am thirsty! And I am looked for at all the public-houses! [Exit unsteadily]

Le Bret [who has made the circuit of the house, returning toward RAGUENEAU, in a tone of relief] Cyrano is not here

Ragueneau And yet . . .

Le Bret I will trust to Fortune he has not seen the announcement

The Audience Begin! Begin!

One of the Marquises [watching DE GUICHE, who comes from ROXANE's box, and crosses the pit, surrounded by obsequious satellites, among whom the VICOMTE DE VALVERT] Always a court about him, De Guiche!

Other Marquis Pfi! Another Gascon!

First Marquis A Gascon, of the cold and supple sort That sort succeeds Believe me, it will be best to offer him our duty.

[They approach DE GUICHE]

Second Marquis These admirable ribbons! What color, Comte de Guiche? Should you call it Kiss-me-Sweet or . . . Expiring Fawn?

De Guiche This shade is called Sick Spaniard

First Marquis Appropriately called, for shortly, thanks to your valor, the Spaniard will be sick indeed, in Flanders!

De Guiche I am going upon the stage Are you coming? [He walks toward the stage, followed by all the MARQUISES and men of quality He turns and calls] Valvert, come!

Christian [who has been listening and watching them, starts on hearing that name] The vicomte! Ah, in his face in his face I will fling my [He puts his hand to his pocket and finds the pickpocket's hand He turns] Hem?

Pickpocket Ai!

Christian [without letting him go] I was looking for a glove

Pickpocket [with an abject smile] And you found a hand [In a different tone, low and rapid] Let me go . . . I will tell you a secret

Christian [without releasing him] Well?

*Pickpocket.* Lignière who has just left you

*Christian* [as above] Yes? . .

*Pickpocket* Has not an hour to live A song he made annoyed one of the great, and a hundred men—I am one of them—will be posted to-night . . .

*Christian* A hundred? . . . By whom?

*Pickpocket* Honor . . .

*Christian* [shrugging his shoulders] Oh!

*Pickpocket* [with great dignity]. Among rogues!

*Christian* Where will they be posted?

*Pickpocket* At the Porte de Nesle, on his way home Inform him

*Christian* [letting him go]. But where can I find him?

*Pickpocket* Go to all the taverns the Golden Vat, the Pine-Apple, the Belt and Bosom, the Twin Torches, the Three Funnels, and in each one leave a scrap of writing warning him

*Christian* Yes I will run! . . . Ah, the blackguards! A hundred against one! . . . [Looks lovingly toward ROXANE] Leave her! . . . [Furiously, looking toward VALVERT] And him! . . . But Lignière must be prevented [Exit running]

[DE GUICHE, the MARQUISES, all the gentry have disappeared behind the curtain, to place themselves on the stage-seats The pit is crowded There is not an empty seat in the boxes or the gallery]

*The Audience* Begin!

*A Burgher* [whose wig goes sailing off at the end of a string held by one of the PAGES in the upper gallery] My wig!

*Screams of Delight* He is bald! . . . The pages! . . . Well done! . . . Ha, ha, ha! . .

*The Burgher* [furious, shaking his fist] Imp of Satan!

[Laughter and screams, beginning very loud and decreasing suddenly Dead silence]

*Le Bret* [astounded] This sudden hush? . . . [One of the spectators whispers in his ear] Ah?

*The Spectator* I have it from a reliable quarter

*Running Murmurs* Hush! . . . Has he come? No! Yes, he has! . . In the

box with the grating . . . The cardinal! . . the cardinal! . . the cardinal! .

*One of the Pages* What a shame! . . Now we shall have to behave!

[Knocking on the stage. Complete stillness Pause]

*Voice of one of the Marquises* [breaking the deep silence, behind the curtain] Snuff that candle!

*Other Marquis* [thrusting his head out between the curtains] A chair!

[A chair is passed from hand to hand, above the heads The MARQUIS takes it and disappears, after kissing his hand repeatedly toward the boxes]

*A Spectator* Silence!

[Once more, the three knocks The curtain opens Tableau The MARQUISES seated at the sides, in attitudes of languid haughtiness The stage-setting is the faint-colored bluish sort usual in a pastoral Four small crystal candelabra light the stage The violins play softly]

*Le Bret* [to RAGUENEAU, under breath] Is Montfleury the first to appear?

*Ragueneau* [likewise under breath] Yes The opening lines are his

*Le Bret* Cyrano is not here

*Ragueneau* I have lost my wager

*Le Bret* Let us be thankful Let us be thankful

[A bagpipe is heard MONTFLEURY appears upon the stage, enormous, in a conventional shepherd's costume, with a rose-wreathed hat set jauntily on the side of his head, breathing into a beribboned bagpipe]

*The Pit* [applauding] Bravo, Montfleury! Montfleury!

*Montfleury* [after bowing, proceeds to play the part of PHAEOLO]

Happy the man who, freed from Fashion's fickle sway,

In exile self-prescribed whiles peaceful hours away,

Who when Zephyrus sighs amid the answering trees

*A Voice* [from the middle of the pit] Rogue! Did I not forbid you for one month?

[*Consternation Every one looks around Murmurs*]  
*Various Voices* Hei? What? What is the matter?

[*Many in the boxes rise to see*]  
*Cungy* It is he!  
*Le Bret* [*alarmed*] *Cyrano*!  
*The Voice* King of the Obese! Incon-  
 tinently vanish!  
*The Whole Audience* [*indignantly*].  
 Oh!

*Montfleury* But . . .  
*The Voice* You stop to muse upon the matter?

*Several Voices* [*from the pit and the boxes*] Hush! Enough! . . . Proceed,  
*Montfleury* Fear nothing!

*Montfleury* [*in an unsteady voice*].  
 Happy the man who freed from Fashion's f—

*The Voice* [*more threatening than before*] How is this? Shall I be constrained, Man of the Monster Belly, to enforce my regulation . . . regularly?

[*An arm holding a cane leaps above the level of the heads*]

*Montfleury* [*in a voice growing fainter and fainter*]

Happy the man . . .

[*The cane is wildly flourished*]

*The Voice* Leave the stage!

*The Pit* Oh!

*Montfleury* [*choking*]

Happy the man who freed . . .

*Cyrano* [*appears above the audience, standing upon a chair, his arms folded on his chest, his hat at a combative angle, his moustache on end, his nose terrifying*] Ah! I shall lose my temper!

[*Sensation at sight of him*]

*Montfleury* [*to the MARQUISES*] Mes-  
 sieurs, I appeal to you!

*One of the Marquises* [*languidly*] But go ahead! Play!

*Cyrano* Fat man, if you attempt it, I will dust the paint off you with this!

*The Marquis* Enough!

*Cyrano* Let every little landlord keep silence in his seat, or I will ruffle his ribbons with my cane!

*All the Marquises* [*rising*] This is too much! *Montfleury*

*Cyrano* Let *Montfleury* go home, or stay, and, having cut his ears off, I will disembowel him!

*A Voice* But . . .

*Cyrano* Let him go home, I said!

*Other Voice* But after all

*Cyrano* It is not yet done? [*With show of turning up his sleeves*] Very well, upon that stage, as on a platter trimmed with green, you shall see me carve that mount of brawn

*Montfleury* [*calling up his whole dig- nity*] Monsieur, you cast indignity, in my person, upon the Muse!

*Cyrano* [*very civilly*] Monsieur, if that lady, with whom you have naught to do, had the pleasure of beholding you . . . just as you stand, there, like a decorated pot! . . . she could not live, I do protest, but she hurled her buskin at you!

*The Pit* *Montfleury!* *Montfleury!*

Give us Baro's piece!

*Cyrano* [*to those shouting around him*] I beg you will show some regard for my scabbard it is ready to give up the sword!

[*The space around him widens*]

*The Crowd* [*backing away*] Hey . . . softly, there!

*Cyrano* [*to MONTFLEURY*] Go off!

*The Crowd* [*closing again, and grum- bling*] Oh! Oh!

*Cyrano* [*turning suddenly*] Has some- body objections?

[*The crowd again pushes away from him*]

*A Voice* [*at the back, singing*]

Monsieur de *Cyrano*, one sees,

Inclines to be tyrannical,

In spite of that tyrannicle

We shall see *La Clorise*!

*The Whole Audience* [*catching up the tune*] *La Clorise! La Clorise!*

*Cyrano* Let me hear that song again, and I will do you all to death with my stick!

*A Burgher* Samson come back! . . .

*Cyrano* Lend me your jaw, good man!

*A Lady* [*in one of the boxes*] This is unheard of!

*A Man* It is scandalous!

*A Burgher* It is irritating, to say no more

*A Page* What fun it is!

*The Pit* Hss! *Montfleury!* . . .

*Cyrano!* . . .

*Cyrano* Be still!

*The Pit* [*in uproar*] Hee-haw! . . .

Baaaaah! . . Bow-wow! . . Cockadoodledooooo!

*Cyrano* I will . . .

*A Page* Meeow!

*Cyrano* I order you to hold your tongues! . . I dare the floor collectively to utter another sound! . . I challenge you, one and all! . . I will take down your names . . Step forward, budding heroes! Each in his turn You shall be given numbers Come, which one of you will open the joust with me? You, monsieur? No! You? No! The first that offers is promised all the mortuary honors due the brave Let all who wish to die hold up their hands! [*Silence*] It is modesty that makes you shrink from the sight of my naked sword? Not a name? Not a hand?—Very good Then I proceed [*Turning toward the stage where MONTFLEURY is waiting in terror*] As I was saying, it is my wish to see the stage cured of this tumor Otherwise . . . [*claps hand to his sword*] the lancet!

*Montfleury* I . . .

*Cyrano* [*gets down from his chair, and sits in the space that has become vacant around him, with the ease of one at home*] Thrice will I clap my hands, O plenilune! At the third clap . . eclipse!

*The Pit* [*diverted*] Ah! . . .

*Cyrano* [*clapping his hands*] One! .

*Montfleury* I

*A Voice* [*from one of the boxes*] Do not go!

*The Pit* He will stay! . He will go!

*Montfleury* Messieurs, I feel . .

*Cyrano* Two!

*Montfleury* I feel it will perhaps be wiser

*Cyrano* Three! .

[*MONTFLEURY disappears, as if through a trap-door Storm of laughter, hissing, catcalls*]

*The House* Hoo! . Hoo! . Milk-sop! Come back! .

*Cyrano* [*beaming, leans back in his chair and crosses his legs*] Let him come back, if he dare!

*A Burgher* The spokesman of the company!

[*BELLEROSE comes forward on the stage and bows*]

*The Boxes* Ah, there comes Bellerose!

*Bellerose* [*with elegant bearing and diction*] Noble ladies and gentlemen

*The Pit* No! No! Jodelet . We want Jodelet!

*Jodelet* [*comes forward, speaks through his nose*] Pack of swine!

*The Pit* That is right! . . Well said! . Bravo!

*Jodelet* Don't bravo me! . The portly tragedian, whose paunch is your delight, felt sick!

*The Pit* He is a poltroon! .

*Jodelet* He was obliged to leave .

*The Pit* Let him come back!

*Some* No!

*Others* Yes! . .

*A Youth* [*to CYRANO*] But, when all is said, monsieur, what good grounds have you for hating Montfleury?

*Cyrano* [*amiably, sitting as before*]. Young gosling, I have two, whereof each, singly, would be ample Primo He is an execrable actor, who bellows, and with grunts that would disgrace a water-carrier launches the verse that should go forth as if on pinions! Secundo is my secret

*The Old Burgher* [*behind CYRANO*] But without compunction you deprive us of hearing La Clorise I am determined

*Cyrano* [*turning his chair around so as to face the old gentleman, respectfully*] Venerable mule, old Baro's verses being what they are, I do it without compunction, as you say

*The Précieuses* [*in the boxes*] Ha! Ho! . . Our own Baro! . My dear, did you hear that? How can such a thing be said? . . Ha! Ho!

*Cyrano* [*turning his chair so as to face the boxes, gallantly*] Beautiful creatures, do you bloom and shine, be ministers of dreams, your smiles our anodyne Inspire poets, but poems . spare to judge!

*Bellerose* But the money which must be given back at the door!

*Cyrano* [*turning his chair to face the stage*] Bellerose, you have said the only intelligent thing that has, as yet, been said! Far from me to wrong by so much as a fringe the worshipful mantle of Thespis [*He rises and flings a bag upon the stage*] Catch! and keep quiet!

*The House* [*dazzled*] Ah! Oh!

*Jodelet* [*numbly picking up the bag, weighing it with his hand*] For such a

price, you are authorized, monsieur, to come and stop the performance every day!

*The House* Hoo! Hoo! .

*Jodelet* Should we be hooted in a body!

*Bellerose* The house must be evacuated!

*Jodelet* Evacuate it!

[*The audience begins to leave;*

*CYRANO* looking on with a satisfied air *The crowd, however, becoming interested in the following scene, the exodus is suspended. The women in the boxes who were already standing and had put on their wraps, stop to listen and end by resuming their seats.]*

*Le Bret* [to *CYRANO*]. What you have done is mad!

*A Bore* Montfleury! . . . the eminent actor! What a scandal! . . . But the Duc de Candale is his patron! . . . Have you a patron, you?

*Cyrano* No!

*The Bore* You have not?

*Cyrano* No!

*The Bore* What? You are not protected by some great nobleman under the cover of whose name . . .

*Cyrano* [exasperated] No, I have told you twice. Must I say the same thing thrice? No, I have no protector [hand on sword] but this will do.

*The Bore* Then, of course, you will leave town.

*Cyrano* That will depend.

*The Bore* But the Duc de Candale has a long arm.

*Cyrano* Not so long as mine [pointing to his sword] pieced out with this!

*The Bore* But you cannot have the presumption.

*Cyrano* I can, yes.

*The Bore* But . . .

*Cyrano* And now, . . . face about!

*The Bore* But

*Cyrano* Face about, I say or else, tell me why you are looking at my nose.

*The Bore* [bewildered] I

*Cyrano* [advancing upon him] In what is it unusual?

*The Bore* [backing] Your worship is mistaken.

*Cyrano* [same business as above] Is it flabby and pendulous, like a proboscis?

*The Bore* I never said

*Cyrano* Or hooked like a hawk's beak?

*The Bore* I .

*Cyrano* Do you discern a mole upon the tip?

*The Bore* But . . .

*Cyrano* Or is a fly disporting himself thereon? What is there wonderful about it?

*The Bore* Oh .

*Cyrano* Is it a freak of nature?

*The Bore* But I had refrained from casting so much as a glance at it!

*Cyrano* And why, I pray, should you not look at it?

*The Bore* I had . . .

*Cyrano* So it disgusts you?

*The Bore* Sir

*Cyrano* Its color strikes you as unwholesome?

*The Bore* Sir

*Cyrano* Its shape, unfortunate?

*The Bore* But far from it!

*Cyrano* Then wherefore that depreciating air? . . . Perhaps monsieur thinks it a shade too large?

*The Bore* Indeed not. No, indeed I think it small . . . small,—I should have said, minute!

*Cyrano* What? How? Charge me with such a ridiculous defect? Small, my nose? Ho!

*The Bore* Heavens!

*Cyrano* Enormous, my nose! . . . Con-temptible stutterer, snub-nosed and flat-headed, be it known to you that I am proud, proud of such an appendage! Inasmuch as a great nose is properly the index of an affable, kindly, courteous man, witty, liberal, brave, such as I am! and such as you are for evermore precluded from supposing yourself, deplorable rogue! For the inglorious surface my hand encounters above your ruff, is no less devoid— [Strikes him.]

*The Bore* Aï! aï!

*Cyrano* Of pride, alacrity and sweep, of perception and of gift, of heavenly spark, of sumptuousness, to sum up all, of nose, than that [turns him around by the shoulders and suits the action to the word], which stops my boot below your spine!

*The Bore* [running off] Help! The watch!

*Cyrano* Warning to the idle who might find entertainment in my organ of smell. And if the facetious fellow be of birth

my custom is, before I let him go to chasten him, in front, and higher up, with steel, and not with hide!

*De Guiche* [who has stepped down from the stage with the MARQUISES]. He is becoming tiresome!

*Valvert* [shrugging his shoulders]. It is empty bluster!

*De Guiche* Will no one take him up?

*Valvert* No one? . . . Wait! I will have one of those shots at him! [He approaches CYRANO who is watching him, and stops in front of him, in an attitude of silly swagger] Your . . . your nose is . . . err . . . Your nose . . . is very large!

*Cyrano* [gravely] Very.

*Valvert* [laughs] Ha! . . .

*Cyrano* [imperturbable]. Is that all?

*Valvert* But . . .

*Cyrano* Ah, no, young man, that is not enough! You might have said, dear me, there are a thousand things . . . varying the tone . . . For instance . . . here you are — Aggressive "I, monsieur, if I had such a nose, nothing would serve but I must cut it off!" Amicable "It must be in your way while drinking, you ought to have a special beaker made!" Descriptive "It is a crag! . . . a peak! . . . a promontory! . . . A promontory, did I say? . . . It is a peninsula!" Inquisitive "What may the office be of that oblong receptacle? Is it an ink-horn or a scissor-case?" Mincing "Do you so dote on birds, you have, fond as a father, been at pains to fit the little darlings with a roost?" Blunt "Tell me, monsieur, you, when you smoke, is it possible you blow the vapor through your nose without a neighbor crying 'The chimney is afire?'" Anxious "Go with caution, I beseech, lest your head, dragged over by that weight, should drag you over!" Tender "Have a little sun-shade made for it! It might get freckled!" Learned "None but the beast, monsieur, mentioned by Aristophanes, the hippocampelephantocamelos, can have borne beneath his forehead so much cartilage and bone!" Off-hand "What, comrade, is that sort of peg in style? Capital to hang one's hat upon!" Emphatic "No wind can hope, O lordly nose, to give the whole of you a cold, but the Nor'-Wester!" Dramatic. "It is the Red Sea when it bleeds!" Admiring "What a sign for a perfumer's shop!" Lyrical "Art thou a

Triton, and is that thy conch?" Simple: "A monument! When is admission free?" Deferent "Suffer, monsieur, that I should pay you my respects that is what I call possessing a house of your own!" Rustic "Hi, boys! Call that a nose? Ye don't gull me! It's either a prize carrot or else a stunted gourd!" Military "Level against the cavalry!" Practical "Will you put it up for raffle? Indubitably, sir, it will be the feature of the game!" And finally in parody of weeping Pyramus "Behold, behold the nose that traitorously destroyed the beauty of its master! and is blushing for the same!" — That, my dear sir, or something not unlike, is what you would have said to me, had you the smallest leaven of letters or of wit, but of wit, O most pitiable of objects made by God, you never had a rudiment, and of letters, you have just those that are needed to spell "fool!" — But, had it been otherwise, and had you been possessed of the fertile fancy requisite to shower upon me, here, in this noble company, that volley of sprightly pleasantries, still should you not have delivered yourself of so much as a quarter of the tenth part of the beginning of the first . . . For I let off these good things at myself, and with sufficient zest, but do not suffer another to let them off at me!

*De Guiche* [attempting to lead away the amazed vicomte] Let be, vicomte!

*Valvert* That insufferable haughty bearing! . . . A clodhopper without without so much as gloves . . . who goes abroad without points or bow-knots! .

*Cyrano* My foppery is of the inner man I do not trick myself out like a popinjay, but I am more fastidious, if I am not so showy I would not sally forth, by any chance, not washed quite clean of an affront, my conscience foggy about the eye, my honor crumpled, my nicety black-rimmed I walk with all upon me furbished bright I plume myself with independence and straightforwardness It is not a handsome figure, it is my soul, I hold erect as in a brace I go decked with exploits in place of ribbon bows I taper to a point my wit like a moustache And at my passage through the crowd true sayings ring like spurs!

*Valvert* But, sir . . .

*Cyrano* I am without gloves? . . . a



mighty matter! I only had one left, of a very ancient pair, and even that became a burden to me I left it in somebody's face

Valvert Vilhan, clod-poll, flat-foot, refuse of the earth!

Cyrano [taking off his hat and bowing as if the VICOMTE had been introducing himself] Ah? And mine, Cyrano-Savinen-Hercule of Bergerac!

Valvert [exasperated] Buffoon!

Cyrano [giving a sudden cry, as if seized with a cramp] Ah!

Valvert [who had started toward the back, turning] What is he saying now?

Cyrano [screwing his face as if in pain] It must have leave to star it has a cramp! It is bad for it to be kept still so long!

Valvert What is the matter?

Cyrano My rapier prickles like a foot asleep!

Valvert [drawing] So be it!

Cyrano I shall give you a charming little hurt!

Valvert [contemptuous] A poet!

Cyrano Yes, a poet, and to such an extent, that while we fence, I will, hop! extempore, compose you a ballade!

Valvert A ballade?

Cyrano I fear you do not know what that is

Valvert But

Cyrano [as if saying a lesson] The ballade is composed of three stanzas of eight lines each

Valvert [stamps with his feet] Oh!

Cyrano [continuing] And an envoi of four

Valvert You . .

Cyrano I will with the same breath fight you and compose one And at the last line, I will hit you

Valvert Indeed you will not!

Cyrano No? . . [Declaring] Ballade of the duel which in Burgundy House

Monsieur de Bergerac fought with a jack-anapes

Valvert And what is that, if you please?

Cyrano That is the title

The Audience [at the highest pitch of excitement] Make room! Good sport!

Stand aside! Keep still!

[Tableau A ring, in the pit, of the

interested, the MARQUISES and OFFICERS scattered among the BURGHERS and COMMON PEOPLE The PAGES have climbed on the shoulders of various ones, the better to see All the women are standing in the boxes At the right, DE GUICHE and his attendant gentlemen At left, LE BRET, RAGUENEAU, CUIGY, etc]

Cyrano [closing his eyes a second] Wait I am settling upon the rhymes There I have them

[In declaiming, he suits the action to the word]

Of my broad felt made lighter,

I cast my mantle broad,

And stand, poet and fighter,

To do and to record

I bow, I draw my sword . . .

En garde! with steel and wit

I play you at first aboard . . .

At the last line, I hit!

[They begin fencing]

You should have been politer;

Where had you best be gored?

The left side or the right—ah?

Or next your azure cord?

Or where the spleen is stored?

Or in the stomach pit?

Come we to quick accord . . .

At the last line, I hit!

You falter, you turn whiter?

You do so to afford

Your foe a rhyme in "iter"?

You thrust at me—I ward—

And balance is restored

Lardon! Look to your spit! . .

No, you shall not be floored

Before my cue to hit!

[He announces solemnly.]

#### ENVOI

Prince, call upon the Lord! . . .

I skirmish . . feint a bit . . .

I lunge! I keep my word!

[The VICOMTE staggers, CYRANO bows]

At the last line, I hit!

[Acclamations Applause from the boxes Flowers and handkerchiefs are thrown The OFFICERS surround and congratulate CYRANO RAGUENEAU dances with delight LE BRET is tearfully joyous and



*at the same time highly troubled*  
*The friends of the VICOMTE sup-*  
*port him off the stage]*

*The Crowd [in a long shout] Ah! . . .*

*A Light-Cavalry Man Superb!*

*A Woman Sweet!*

*Ragueneau. Astounding!*

*A Marquis Novel!*

*Le Bret Insensate!*

*The Crowd [pressing around CYRANO]*  
*Congratulations! . . . Well done! . . .*  
*Bravo! . . .*

*A Woman's Voice He is a hero!*

*A Mousquetaire [striding swiftly toward*  
*CYRANO, with outstretched hand] Monsieur,*  
*will you allow me? It was quite, quite*  
*excellently done, and I think I know*  
*whereof I speak. But, as a fact, I ex-*  
*pressed my mind before, by making a huge*  
*noise [He retires]*

*Cyrano [to CUGY] Who may the gentle-*  
*man be?*

*Cugy D'Artagnan.*

*Le Bret [to CYRANO, taking his arm]*  
*Come, I wish to talk with you*

*Cyrano Wait till the crowd has thinned*  
*[To BELLEROSE] I may remain?*

*Bellerose [deferentially] Why, certainly!*  
*[Shouts are heard outside]*

*Jodelet [after looking] They are hoot-*  
*ing Montfleury*

*Bellerose [solemnly] Sic transit! . . .*  
*[In a different tone, to the doorkeeper and*  
*the candle snuffer] Sweep and close. Leave*  
*the lights. We shall come back, after eat-*  
*ing, to rehearse a new farce for to-morrow*

*[Exeunt JODELET and BELLEROSE,*  
*after bowing very low to CY-*  
*RANO]*

*The Doorkeeper [to CYRANO] Monsieur*  
*will not be going to dinner?*

*Cyrano I? . . . No*

*[The doorkeeper withdraws]*

*Le Bret [to CYRANO] And this, be-*  
*cause?*

*Cyrano [proudly] Because . . . [in a*  
*different tone, having seen that the door-*  
*keeper is too far to overhear] I have not*  
*a penny!*

*Le Bret [making the motion of flinging*  
*a bag] How is this? The bag of crowns*

*Cyrano Monthly remittance, thou last-*  
*edst but a day!*

*Le Bret And to keep you the remainder*  
*of the month?*

*Cyrano Nothing is left!*

*Le Bret But then, flinging that bag,*  
*what a child's prank!*

*Cyrano But what a gesture! . . .*

*The Sweetmeat Vender [coughing behind*  
*her little counter] Hm! . . . [CYRANO and*  
*LE BRET turn toward her. She comes timidly*  
*forward] Monsieur, to know you have not*  
*eaten . . . makes my heart ache [Pointing*  
*to the sweetmeat-stand] I have there all*  
*that is needed . . . [impulsively], Help*  
*yourself!*

*Cyrano [taking off his hat] Dear child,*  
*despite my Gascon pride, which forbids*  
*that I should profit at your hand by the*  
*most inconsiderable of dainties, I fear too*  
*much less a denial should grieve you. I*  
*will accept therefore . . . [He goes to the*  
*stand and selects] Oh, a trifle! A*  
*grape off this . . . [She proffers the bunch,*  
*he takes a single grape] No . . . one!*  
*This glass of water . . . [She starts to pour*  
*wine into it, he stops her] No . . . clear!*  
*And half a macaroon*

*[He breaks in two the macaroon,*  
*and returns half]*

*Le Bret This comes near being silly!*

*Sweetmeat Vender Oh, you will take*  
*something more! . . .*

*Cyrano Yes Your hand to kiss*

*[He kisses the hand she holds out*  
*to him, as if it were that of a*  
*princess]*

*Sweetmeat Vender Monsieur, I thank*  
*you [Curtseys] Good-evening! [Exit]*

*Cyrano [to LE BRET] I am listening*  
*[He establishes himself before the stand,*  
*sets the macaroon before him] Dinner!*  
*[does the same with the glass of water]*  
*Drink! [and with the grape] Dessert!*  
*[He sits down] La! let me begin! I was*  
*as hungry as a wolf! [Eating] You were*  
*saying?*

*Le Bret That if you listen to none but*  
*those great boobies and swashbucklers your*  
*judgment will become wholly perverted*  
*Inquire, will you, of the sensible, concern-*  
*ing the effect produced to-day by your*  
*prowesses*

*Cyrano [finishing his macaroon]. Enor-*  
*mous!*

*Le Bret The cardinal . . .*

*Cyrano [beaming] He was there, the*  
*cardinal?*

*Le Bret* Must have found what you did

*Cyrano* To a degree, original

*Le Bret* Still .

*Cyrano* He is a poet It cannot be distasteful to him wholly that one should deal confusion to a fellow-poet's play

*Le Bret* But, seriously, you make too many enemies!

*Cyrano* [*biting into the grape*] How many, thereabouts, should you think I made to-night?

*Le Bret* Eight and forty. Not mentioning the women

*Cyrano* Come, tell them over!

*Le Bret* Montfleury, the old merchant, De Guiche, the Vicomte, Baro, the whole Academy

*Cyrano* Enough! You steep me in bliss!

*Le Bret* But whither will the road you follow lead you? What can your object be?

*Cyrano* I was wandering aimlessly, too many roads were open too many resolves, too complex, allowed of being taken I took

*Le Bret* Which?

*Cyrano* By far the simplest of them all I decided to be, in every matter, always, admirable!

*Le Bret* [*shrugging his shoulders*] That will do—But tell me, will you not, the motive—look, the true one!—of your dislike to Montfleury

*Cyrano* [*rising*] That old Silenus, who has not seen his knees this many a year, still believes himself a delicate desperate danger to the fair And as he struts and burrs upon the stage, makes sheep's-eyes at them with his moist frog's-eyes And I have hated him oh, properly! since the night he was so daring as to cast his glance on her her, who—Oh, I thought I saw a slug crawl over a flower!

*Le Bret* [*amazed*]. Hey? What? Is it possible?

*Cyrano* [*with a bitter laugh*] That I should love? [*In a different tone, seriously*] I love

*Le Bret* And may one know? You never told me

*Cyrano* Whom I love? Come, think a little. The dream of being beloved, even

by the beautiful, is made, to me, an empty dream indeed by this good nose, my fore-runner ever by a quarter of an hour Hence, whom should I love? . . . It seems superfluous to tell you! . . . I love it was inevitable! . . . the most beautiful that breathes!

*Le Bret* The most beautiful? . . .

*Cyrano* No less, in the whole world! And the most resplendent, and the most delicate of wit, and among the golden-haired . . . [*with overwhelming despair*] Still the superlative!

*Le Bret* Dear me, what is this fair one?

*Cyrano* All unawares, a deadly snare, exquisite without concern to be so A snare of nature's own, a musk-rose, in which ambush Love lies low Who has seen her smile remembers the ineffable! There is not a thing so common but she turns it into prettiness, and in the merest nod or beck she can make manifest all the attributes of a goddess No, Venus! you cannot step into your iridescent shell, nor, Dian, you, walk through the blossoming groves, as she steps into her chair and walks in Paris!

*Le Bret* Saprista! I understand! It is clear!

*Cyrano* It is pellucid

*Le Bret* Magdeleine Robin, your cousin?

*Cyrano* Yes, Roxane

*Le Bret* But, what could be better? You love her? Tell her so! You covered yourself with glory in her sight a moment since

*Cyrano* Look well at me, dear friend, and tell me how much hope you think can be justly entertained with this protuberance Oh, I foster no illusions! . . . Sometimes, indeed, yes, in the violet dusk, I yield, even I! to a dreamy mood I penetrate some garden that lies sweetening the hour With my poor great devil of a nose I sniff the April And as I follow with my eyes some woman passing with some cavalier, I think how dear would I hold having to walk beside me, linked like that, slowly, in the soft moonlight, such a one! I kindle—I forget—and then then suddenly I see the shadow of my profile upon the garden-wall!

*Le Bret* [*touched*] My friend . . .

*Cyrano* Friend, I experience a bad

half hour sometimes, in feeling so unsightly . . . and alone

*Le Bret* [in quick sympathy, taking his hand] You weep?

*Cyrano*. Ah, God forbid! That? Never! No, that would be unsightly to excess! That a tear should course the whole length of this nose! Never, so long as I am accountable, shall the divine loveliness of tears be implicated with so much gross ugliness! Mark me well, nothing is so holy as are tears, nothing! and never shall it be that, rousing mirth through me, a single one of them shall seem ridiculous!

*Le Bret*. Come, do not despond! Love is a lottery.

*Cyrano* [shaking his head]. No! I love Cleopatra do I resemble Cæsar? I worship Berenice do I put you in mind of Titus?

*Le Bret* But your courage . . . and your wit!—The little girl who but a moment ago bestowed on you that very modest meal, her eyes, you must have seen as much, did not exactly hate you!

*Cyrano* [impressed] That is true!

*Le Bret* You see? So, then!—But Roxane herself, in following your duel, went lily-pale

*Cyrano* Lily-pale? . . .

*Le Bret* Her mind, her heart as well, are struck with wonder! Be bold, speak to her, in order that she may . . .

*Cyrano* Laugh in my face! . . . No, there is but one thing upon earth I fear

. It is that

*The Doorkeeper* [admitting the DUENNA to CYRANO]. Monsieur, you are inquired for

*Cyrano* [seeing the DUENNA]. Ah, my God! her duenna!

*The Duenna* [with a great curtsey]. Somebody wishes to know of her valorous cousin where one may, in private, see him

*Cyrano* [upset] See me?

*The Duenna* [with curtsey]. See you. There are things for your ear.

*Cyrano* There are . . . ?

*The Duenna* [other curtsey] Things

*Cyrano* [staggering] Ah, my God! . . .

*The Duenna* Somebody intends, to-morrow, at the earliest roses of the dawn, to hear Mass at Saint Roch

*Cyrano* [upholds himself by leaning on LE BRET] Ah, my God!

*The Duenna* That over, where might one step in a moment, have a little talk?

*Cyrano* [losing his senses]. Where? . . . I But Ah, my God!

*The Duenna* Expedition, if you please

*Cyrano* I am casting about . .

*The Duenna* Where?

*Cyrano* At at . . . at Ragueneau's . . . the pastrycook's

*The Duenna*. He lodges?

*Cyrano*. In . . . In Rue . . . Ah, my God! my God! . . . St Honoré

*The Duenna* [retiring] We will be there Do not fail At seven

*Cyrano* I will not fail [Exit DUENNA]

*Cyrano* [falling on LE BRET's neck] To me . . . from her . . . a meeting!

*Le Bret* Well, your gloom is dispelled?

*Cyrano* Ah, to whatever end it may be, she is aware of my existence!

*Le Bret* And now you will be calm?

*Cyrano* [beside himself]. Now, I shall be fulminating and frenetical! I want an army all complete to put to rout! I have ten hearts and twenty arms I cannot now be suited with felling dwarfs to earth . . . [At the top of his lungs] Giants are what I want!

[During the last lines, on the stage at the back, shadowy shapes of players have been moving about The rehearsal has begun, the fiddlers have resumed their places]

A Voice [from the stage] Hey! Psst! Over there! A little lower. We are trying to rehearse!

*Cyrano* [laughing] We are going!

[He goes toward the back]

[Through the street door, enter CUGY, BRISSAILE, several OFFICERS supporting LIGNIERE in a state of complete intoxication]

*Cugy*. Cyrano!

*Cyrano* What is this?

*Cugy* A *turdus vinnaticus* we are bringing you

*Cyrano* [recognizing him] Lignière! Hey, what has happened to you?

*Cugy* He is looking for you

*Brissaille* He cannot go home.

*Cyrano* Why?

*Lignière* [in a thick voice, showing him a bit of crumpled paper] This note bids me beware A hundred men against

me . on account of lampoon grave danger threatening me . Porte de Nesle . must pass it to get home Let me come and sleep under your roof

Cyrano A hundred, did you say?—You shall sleep at home!

Lignière [frightened] But . . .

Cyrano [in a terrible voice, pointing to the lighted lantern which the DOORKEEPER stands swinging as he listens to this scene] Take that lantern [LIGNIÈRE hurriedly takes it] and walk! I swear to tuck you in your bed to-night myself [To the OFFICERS] You, follow at a distance. You may look on!

Cungy But a hundred men . . .

Cyrano Are not one man too many for my mood to-night!

[The players, in their several costumes, have stepped down from the stage and come nearer]

Le Bret But why take under your especial care

Cyrano Still Le Bret is not satisfied!

Le Bret That most commonplace of sots?

Cyrano [slapping LIGNIÈRE on the shoulder] Because this sot, this cask of muscatel, this hogshead of rosolio, did once upon a time a wholly pretty thing On leaving Mass, having seen her whom he loved take holy-water, as the rite prescribes, he whom the sight of water puts to flight, ran to the holy-water bowl, and stooping over, drank it dry . . .

An Actress [in the costume of soubrette] Tiens, that was nice!

Cyrano Was it not, soubrette?

The Soubrette [to the others] But why are they, a hundred, all against one poor poet?

Cyrano Let us start! [To the OFFICERS] And you, gentlemen, when you see me attack, whatever you may suppose to be my danger, do not stir to second me!

Another of the Actresses [jumping from the stage] Oh, I will not miss seeing this!

Cyrano Come!

Another Actress [likewise jumping from the stage, to an elderly actor] Cassandre, will you not come?

Cyrano Come, all of you! The Doctor,

Isabel, Leander, all! and you shall lend, charming fantastic swarm, an air of Italian farce to the Spanish drama in view Yes, you shall be a tinkling heard above a roar, like bells about a tambourine!

All the Women [in great glee] Bravo!

Hurry! A mantle! . . . A hood!

Jodelet Let us go!

Cyrano [to the fiddlers] You will favor us with a tune, messieurs the violinists!

[The fiddlers fall into the train The lighted candles which furnished the footlights are seized and distributed The procession becomes a torchlight procession]

Cyrano Bravo! Officers, beauty in fancy dress, and, twenty steps ahead . [he takes the position he describes] I, by myself, under the feather stuck, with her own hand, by Glory, in my hat! Proud as a Scipio trebly Nasica!—It is understood? Formal interdiction to interfere with me!—We are ready? One! Two! Three! Door-keeper, open the door!

[The DOORKEEPER opens under the folding door. A picturesque corner of Old Paris appears, bathed in moonlight]

Cyrano Ah! . Paris floats in dim nocturnal mist The sloping blueish roofs are washed with moonlight A setting, exquisite indeed, offers itself for the scene about to be enacted . . . Yonder, under silvery vapor wreathes, like a mysterious magic mirror, glimmers the Seine

And you shall see what you shall see!

All To the Porte de Nesle!

Cyrano [standing on the threshold]. To the Porte de Nesle! [Before crossing it, he turns to the SOUBRETTE] Were you not asking, mademoiselle, why upon that solitary rhymster a hundred men were set? [He draws his sword, and tranquilly] Because it was well known he is a friend of mine! [Exit]

[To the sound of the violins, by the flickering light of the candles, the procession—LIGNIÈRE staggering at the head, the ACTRESSES arm in arm with the OFFICERS, the players capering behind,—follows out into the night]

## ACT TWO

## THE COOKSHOP OF POETS

RAGUENEAU'S shop, vast kitchen at the corner of Rue St Honoré and Rue de l'Arbre-Sec, which can be seen at the back, through the glass door, gray in the early dawn

At the left, in front, a counter overhung by a wrought-iron canopy from which geese, ducks, white peacocks are hanging In large china jars, tall nosegays composed of the simpler flowers, mainly sunflowers On the same side, in the middle distance, an enormous fireplace, in front of which, between huge androns, each of which supports a small iron pot, roasting meats drip into appropriate pans

At the right, door in the front wing. In the middle distance, a staircase leading to a loft, the interior of which is seen through open shutters, a spread table lighted by a small Flemish candelabrum, shows it to be an eating-room A wooden gallery continuing the stairway, suggests other similar rooms to which it may lead

In the centre of the shop, an iron hoop—which can be lowered by means of a rope,—to which large roasts are hooked

In the shadow, under the stairway, ovens are glowing. Copper molds and saucepans are shining, spits turning, hams swinging, pastry pyramids showing fair It is the early beginning of the workday. Bustling of hurried scullions, portly cooks and young cook's-assistants; swarming of caps decorated with hen feathers and guinea-fowl wings Wicker crates and broad sheets of tin are brought in loaded with broches and tarts

There are tables covered with meats and cakes, others, surrounded by chairs, await customers In a corner, a smaller table, littered with papers At the rise of the curtain, RAGUENEAU is discovered seated at this table, writing with an inspired air, and counting upon his fingers

First Pastrycook [bringing in a tall molded pudding] Nougat of fruit!

Second Pastrycook [bringing in the dish he names] Custard!

Third Pastrycook [bringing in a fowl roasted in its feathers]. Peacock!

Fourth Pastrycook [bringing in a tray of cakes] Mince-pies!

Fifth Pastrycook [bringing in a deep earthen dish] Beef stew!

Ragueneau [laying down his pen, and looking up] Daybreak already plates with silver the copper pans! Time, Ragueneau, to smother within thee the singing divinity! The hour of the lute will come anon—now is that of the ladle! [He rises, speaking to one of the cooks] You, sir, be so good as to lengthen this gravy,—it is too thick!

The Cook How much?

Ragueneau Three feet. [Goes farther]

The Cook What does he mean?

First Pastrycook Let me have the tart!

Second Pastrycook The dumpling!

Ragueneau [standing before the fireplace] Spread thy wings, Muse, and fly further, that thy lovely eyes may not be reddened at the sordid kitchen fire! [To one of the cooks, pointing at some small loaves of bread] You have improperly placed the cleft in those loaves, the cæsura belongs in the middle,—between the hemistichs! [To another of the Cooks, pointing at an unfinished pastry] This pastry palace requires a roof! [To a young cook's apprentice, who, seated upon the floor, is putting fowls on a spit] And you, on that long spit, arrange, my son, in pleasing alternation, the modest pullet and the splendid turkey-cock,—even as our wise Malherbe alternated of old the greater with the lesser lines, and so with roasted fowls compose a poem!

Another Apprentice [coming forward with a platter covered by a napkin] Master, in your honor, see what I have baked. . I hope you are pleased with it!

Ragueneau [ecstatic] A lyre!

The Apprentice Of pie-crust!

Ragueneau [touched] With candied fruits!

The Apprentice And the strings, see,—of spun sugar!

Ragueneau [giving him money] Go, drink my health! [Catching sight of Lise who is entering] Hush! My wife! Move on, and hide that money [To Lise, showing her the lyre, with a constrained air] Fine, is it not?

Lise Ridiculous! [She sets a pile of wrapping-paper on the counter]

*Ragueneau* Paper bags? Good Thanks [He examines them] Heavens! My beloved books! The masterpieces of my friends,—dismembered,—torn!—to fashion paper bags for penny pies!—Ah, the abominable case is re-enacted of Orpheus and the Mænads!

*Lise* [dryly] And have I not an unquestionable right to make what use I can of the sole payment ever got from your paltry scribblers of uneven lines?

*Ragueneau* Pismire! Forbear to insult those divine, melodious crickets!

*Lise* Before frequenting that low crew, my friend, you did not use to call me a Mænad,—no, nor yet a pismire!

*Ragueneau* Put poems to such a use!

*Lise* To that use and no other!

*Ragueneau* If with poems you do this, I should like to know, Madame, what you do with prose!

[Two children have come into the shop]

*Ragueneau* What can I do for you, little ones?

*First Child* Three patties

*Ragueneau* [waiting on them] There you are! Beautifully browned, and piping hot

*Second Child* Please, will you wrap them for us?

*Ragueneau* [starting, aside] There goes one of my bags! [To the children] You want them wrapped, do you? [He takes one of the paper bags, and as he is about to put in the patties, reads] "No otherwise, Ulysses, from Penelope departing" Not this one! [He lays it aside and takes another At the moment of putting in the patties, he reads] "Phæbus of the aureate locks" Not that one! [Same business]

*Lise* [out of patience] Well, what are you waiting for?

*Ragueneau* Here we are Here we are Here we are [He takes a third bag and resigns himself] The sonnet to Phyllis! It is hard, all the same

*Lise* It is lucky you made up your mind [Shrugging her shoulders] Nicodemus!

[She climbs on a chair and arranges dishes on a side-board]

*Ragueneau* [taking advantage of her back

being turned, calls back the children who had already reached the door] Psst! . . . Children! Give me back the sonnet to Phyllis, and you shall have six patties instead of three! [The children give back the paper-bag, joyfully take the patties and exeunt *RAGUENEAU* smooths out the crumpled paper and reads declaiming] "Phyllis!" . . . Upon that charming name, a grease-spot! . . . "Phyllis!" . . .

[Enter *CYRANO* brusquely]

*Cyrano* What time is it?

*Ragueneau* [bowing with eager deference] Six o'clock

*Cyrano* [with emotion] In an hour! [He comes and goes in the shop]

*Ragueneau* [following him]. Bravo! I too was witness . . .

*Cyrano* Of what?

*Ragueneau* Your fight.

*Cyrano* Which?

*Ragueneau* At the Hotel de Bourgogne

*Cyrano* [with disdain] Ah, the duel!

*Ragueneau* [admiringly]. Yes,—the duel in rhyme

*Lise* He can talk of nothing else

*Cyrano* Let him! It does no harm

*Ragueneau* [thrusting with a spit he has seized] "At the last line, I hit!" "At the last line I hit!"—How fine that is! [With growing enthusiasm] "At the last line, I"—

*Cyrano* What time, *Ragueneau*?

*Ragueneau* [remaining fixed in the attitude of thrusting, while he looks at the clock] Five minutes past six—"I hit!" [He recovers from his duelling posture] Oh, to be able to make a ballade!

*Lise* [to *CYRANO*, who in passing her counter has absentmindedly shaken hands with her] What ails your hand?

*Cyrano* Nothing A scratch

*Ragueneau* You have been exposed to some danger?

*Cyrano* None whatever

*Lise* [shaking her finger at him]. I fear that is a fib!

*Cyrano* From the swelling of my nose? The fib in that case must have been good-sized [In a different tone] I am expecting some one You will leave us alone in here

*Ragueneau* But how can I contrive it? My poets shortly will be coming

*Lise* [ironically] For breakfast!

*Cyrano* When I sign to you, you will clear the place of them—What time is it?

*Ragueneau* It is ten minutes past six.

*Cyrano* [*seating himself nervously at RAGUENEAU'S table and helping himself to paper*]. A pen?

*Ragueneau* [*taking one from behind his ear, and offering it*] A swan's quill

A Mousquetaire [*with enormous moustachios, enters; in a stentorian voice*]. Good-morning!

[*LISE goes hurriedly to him, toward the back*]

*Cyrano* [*turning*] What is it?

*Ragueneau* A friend of my wife's,—a warrior,—terrible, from his own report

*Cyrano* [*taking up the pen again, and waving RAGUENEAU away*] Hush! . . . [*To himself*] Write to her, . . . fold the letter, . . . hand it to her, . . . and make my escape . . . [*Throwing down the pen*] Coward! But may I perish if I have the courage to speak to her, . . . to say a single word . . . [*To RAGUENEAU*] What time is it?

*RAGUENEAU* A quarter past six

*Cyrano* [*beating his breast*] A single word of all I carry here! . . . Whereas in writing . . . [*He takes up the pen again*] Come, let us write it then, in very deed, the love-letter I have written in thought so many times, I have but to lay my soul beside my paper, and copy! [*He writes*]

[*Beyond the glass door, shadowy lank hesitating shabby forms are seen moving*]

[*Enter the POETS, clad in black, with hanging hose, sadly mud-splashed*]

*Lise* [*coming forward, to RAGUENEAU*] Here they come, your scarecrows!

*First Poet* [*entering, to RAGUENEAU*]. Brother in art! . . .

*Second Poet* [*shaking both RAGUENEAU'S hands*] Dear fellow-bard . . .

*Third Poet* Eagle of pastrycooks, [*sniffs the air*], your eyrie smells divine!

*Fourth Poet* Phoebus turned baker!

*Fifth Poet* Apollo master-cook!

*Ragueneau* [*surrounded, embraced, shaken by the hand*] How at his ease a man feels at once with them!

*First Poet* The reason we are late, is the crowd at the Porte de Nesle!

*Second Poet* Eight ugly ruffians, ripped

open with the sword, lie weltering on the pavement

*Cyrano* [*raising his head a second*] Eight? I thought there were only seven [*Goes on with his letter*]

*Ragueneau* [*to CYRANO*] Do you happen to know who is the hero of this event?

*Cyrano* [*neghently*]. I? . . . No

*Lise* [*to the MOUSQUETAIRE*] Do you?

The Mousquetaire [*turning up the ends of his moustache*] Possibly!

*Cyrano* [*writing; from time to time he is heard murmuring a word or two*]. . . . "I love you . . ."

*First Poet* A single man, we were told, put a whole gang to flight!

*Second Poet*. Oh, it was a rare sight! The ground was littered with pikes, and cudgels . . .

*Cyrano* [*writing*] . . . "Your eyes . . ."

*Third Poet* Hats were strewn as far as the Goldsmiths' square!

*First Poet*. Sapristi! He must have been a madman of mettle . . .

*Cyrano* [*as above*] " . . . your lips . . ."

*First Poet* An infuriate giant, the doer of that deed!

*Cyrano* [*same business*]. " . . . but when I see you, I come near to swooning with a tender dread . . ."

*Second Poet* [*snapping up a tart*] What have you lately written, Ragueneau?

*Cyrano* [*same business*] " . . . who loves you devotedly " [*In the act of signing the letter, he stops, rises, and tucks it inside his doublet*] No need to sign it I deliver it myself

*Ragueneau* [*to SECOND POET*] I have rhymed a recipe

*Third Poet* [*establishing himself beside a tray of cream puffs*] Let us hear this recipe!

*Fourth Poet* [*examining a broche of which he has possessed himself*] It should not wear its cap so saucily on one side it scarcely looks well! . . . [*Bites off the top*]

*First Poet* See, the spice-cake there, ogling a susceptible poet with eyes of almond under citron brows! [*He takes the spice cake*]

*Second Poet* We are listening!

*Third Poet* [*slightly squeezing a cream puff between his fingers*] This puff creams at the mouth. . . . I water!



*Second Poet* [taking a bite out of the large pastry lyre] For once the Lyre will have filled my stomach!

*Ragueneau* [who has made ready to recite, has coughed, adjusted his cap, struck an attitude] A recipe in rhyme!

*Second Poet* [to *FIRST POET*, nudging him] Is it breakfast, with you?

*First Poet* [to *SECOND POET*] And with you, is it dinner?

*Ragueneau* How Almond Cheese-Cakes should be made

Briskly beat to lightness due,

Eggs, a few,

With the eggs so beaten, beat—

Nicely strained for this same use,—

Lemon-juice,

Adding milk of almonds, sweet

With fine pastry dough, rolled flat,

After that,

Line each little scalloped mold;

Round the sides, light-fingered, spread

Marmalade,

Pour the liquid eggy gold,

Into each delicious pit;

Prison it

In the oven,—and, bye and bye,

Almond cheese-cakes will in gay

Blond array

Bless your nostril and your eye!

*The Poets* [their mouths full] Exquisite!

Delicious!

*One of the Poets* [choking] Humph!

[They go toward the back, eating

*CYRANO*, who has been watching them, approaches *RAGUENEAU*]

*Cyrano* While you recite your works to them, have you a notion how they stuff?

*Ragueneau* [low, with a smile] Yes, I see them without looking, lest they should be abashed I get a double pleasure thus from saying my verses over I satisfy a harmless weakness of which I stand convicted, at the same time as giving those who have not fed a needed chance to feed!

*Cyrano* [slapping him on the shoulder] You, I like you! [*RAGUENEAU* joins his friends *CYRANO* looks after him, then, somewhat sharply] Hey, Lise! [*LISE*, absorbed in tender conversation with the

*MOUSQUETAIRE*, starts and comes forward toward *CYRANO*] Is that captain . . . laying siege to you?

*Lise* [offended] My eyes, sir, have ever held in respect those who meant hurt to my character . . .

*Cyrano* For eyes so resolute . . . I thought yours looked a little languishing!

*Lise* [choking with anger] But

*Cyrano* [bluntly] I like your husband Wherefore, Madame Lise, I say he shall not be so . . . horned!

*Lise* But . . .

*Cyrano* [raising his voice so as to be heard by the *MOUSQUETAIRE*] A word to the wise! [*He bows to the MOUSQUETAIRE*, and after looking at the clock, goes to the door at the back and stands in watch]

*Lise* [to the *MOUSQUETAIRE*, who has simply returned *CYRANO*'s bow] Really . . . I am astonished at you . . . Defy him . . . to his face!

*The Mousquetaire* To his face, indeed! . . . to his face! . . . [*He quickly moves off Lise follows him*]

*Cyrano* [from the door at the back, signalling to *RAGUENEAU* that he should clear the room] Pst!

*Ragueneau* [urging the *POETS* toward the door at the right] We shall be much more comfortable in there . . .

*Cyrano* [impatiently] Pst! . . . Pst! . . .

*Ragueneau* [driving along the *POETS*] I want to read you a little thing of mine

*First Poet* [despairingly, his mouth full] But the provisions

*Second Poet* Shall not be parted from us!

[They follow *RAGUENEAU* in procession, after making a raid on the eatables]

*Cyrano* If I feel that there is so much as a glimmer of hope . . . I will out with my letter!

[*ROXANE*, masked, appears behind the glass door, followed by the *DUENNA*]

*Cyrano* [instantly opening the door] Welcome! [*Approaching the DUENNA*] Madame, a word with you!

*The Duenna* A dozen

*Cyrano* Are you fond of sweets?

*The Duenna* To the point of indigestion!

*Cyrano* [snatching some paper bags off



*the counter*] Good. Here are two sonnets of Benserade's .

*The Duenna* Pooh!

*Cyrano* Which I fill for you with grated almond drops

*The Duenna* [*with a different expression*]. Ha!

*Cyrano* Do you look with favor upon the cake they call a trifle?

*The Duenna* I affect it out of measure, when it has whipped cream inside

*Cyrano*. Six shall be yours, thrown in with a poem by Saint-Amant And in these verses of Chapelain I place this wedge of fruit-cake, light by the side of them . Oh! And do you like tarts . . . little jam ones . . . fresh?

*The Duenna* I dream of them at night!

*Cyrano* [*loading her arms with crammed paper bags*] Do me the favor to go and eat these in the street.

*The Duenna* But . . .

*Cyrano* [*pushing her out*]. And do not come back till you have finished! [*He closes the door upon her, comes forward toward ROXANE, and stands, barcheaded, at a respectful distance*] Blessed forevermore among all hours the hour in which, remembering that so lowly a being still draws breath, you were so gracious as to come to tell me . . . to tell me?

*Roxane* [*who has removed her mask*] First of all, that I thank you. For that churl, that coxcomb yesterday, whom you taught manners with your sword, is the one whom a great nobleman, who fancies himself in love with me . . .

*Cyrano*. De Guiche?

*Roxane* [*dropping her eyes*] Has tried to force upon me as a husband

*Cyrano* Honorary? [*Bowing*] It appears, then, that I fought, and I am glad of it, not for my graceless nose but your thrice-beautiful eyes

*Roxane* Further than that . . . I wished . . . But before I can make the confession I have in mind to make, I must find in you once more the . . . almost brother, with whom as a child I used to play, in the park—do you remember?—by the lake!

*Cyrano* I have not forgotten Yes . . . you came every summer to Bergerac

*Roxane* You used to fashion lances out of reeds .

*Cyrano* The silk of the tasselled corn furnished hair for your doll . . .

*Roxane* It was the time of long delightful games . . .

*Cyrano* And somewhat sour berries .

*Roxane* The time when you did everything I bade you!

*Cyrano* Roxane, wearing short frocks, was known as Magdeleine

*Roxane* Was I pretty in those days?

*Cyrano*. You were not ill-looking

*Roxane* Sometimes, in your venture-some climbings you used to hurt yourself. You would come running to me, your hand bleeding And, playing at being your mamma, I would harden my voice and say . . . [*She takes his hand*] "Will you never keep out of mischief?" [*She stops short, amazed*] Oh, it is too much! Here you have done it again! [*CYRANO tries to draw back his hand*] No! Let me look at it! . . . Aren't you ashamed? A great boy like you! . . . How did this happen, and where?

*Cyrano*. Oh, fun . . . near the Porte de Nesle

*Roxane* [*sitting down at a table and dipping her handkerchief into a glass of water*] Let me have it

*Cyrano* [*sitting down too*] So prettily, so cheeringly maternal!

*Roxane* And tell me, while I wash this naughty blood away with how many were you fighting?

*Cyrano* Oh, not quite a hundred

*Roxane* Tell me about it

*Cyrano* No What does it matter? You tell me, you . . . what you were going to tell me before, and did not dare

*Roxane* [*without releasing his hand*] I do dare, now I have breathed in courage with the perfume of the past Oh, yes, now I dare Here it is There is some one whom I love

*Cyrano* Ah! . . .

*Roxane*. Oh, he does not know it

*Cyrano* Ah! . . .

*Roxane* As yet . . .

*Cyrano* Ah! . . .

*Roxane* But if he does not know it, he soon will

*Cyrano* Ah!

*Roxane* A poor boy who until now has loved me timidly, from a distance, without daring to speak

Cyrano Ah! . .

Roxane No, leave me your hand It is hot, this will cool it . . But I have read his heart in his face

Cyrano Ah! .

Roxane [*completing the bandaging of his hand with her small pocket-handkerchief*] And, cousin, is it not a strange coincidence—that he should serve exactly in your regiment!

Cyrano Ah! . .

Roxane [*laughing*] Yes He is a cadet, in the same company!

Cyrano Ah!

Roxane He bears plain on his forehead the stamp of wit, of genius! He is proud, noble, young, brave, handsome . .

Cyrano [*rising, pale*] Handsome! . .

Roxane What what is the matter?

Cyrano With me? . Nothing! . . . It is it is [*Showing his hand, smiling*] You know! . It smarts a little .

Roxane In short, I love him I must tell you, however, that I have never seen him save at the play

Cyrano Then you have never spoken to each other?

Roxane Only with our eyes.

Cyrano But, then . how can you know? . .

Roxane Oh, under the lindens of Place Royale, people will talk A trustworthy gossip told me many things!

Cyrano A cadet, did you say?

Roxane A cadet, in your company

Cyrano His name?

Roxane Baron Christian de Neuville

Cyrano What? He is not in the cadets

Roxane He is! He certainly is, since morning Captain Carbon de Castel-Jaloux

Cyrano And quickly, quickly, she throws away her heart! But my poor little girl

The Duenna [*opening the door at the back*] Monsieur de Bergerac, I have eaten them, every one!

Cyrano Now read the poetry printed upon the bags! [*The DUENNA disappears*] My poor child, you who can endure none but the choicest language, who savor eloquence and wit, . . if he should be a barbarian!

Roxane No! no! . . He has hair like one of D'Urfé's heroes!

Cyrano If he had on proof as homely a wit as he has pretty hair!

Roxane No! No! . I can see at a single glance, his utterances are fine, pointed . .

Cyrano Ah, yes! A man's utterances are invariably like his moustache! . . . Still, if he were a ninny? . .

Roxane [*stamping with her foot*]. I should die, there!

Cyrano [*after a time*] You bade me come here that you might tell me this? I scarcely see the appropriateness, madame.

Roxane Ah, it was because some one yesterday let death into my soul by telling me that in your company you are all Gascons, . all!

Cyrano And that we pick a quarrel with every impudent fledgling, not Gascon, admitted by favor to our thoroughbred Gascon ranks? That is what you heard?

Roxane Yes, and you can imagine how distracted I am for him!

Cyrano [*in his teeth*]. You well may be!

Roxane But I thought, yesterday, when you towered up, great and invincible, giving his due to that miscreant, standing your ground against those catiffs, I thought "Were he but willing, he of whom all are in awe "

Cyrano Very well, I will protect your little baron

Roxane Ah, you will . you will protect him for me? . . I have always felt for you the tenderest regard!

Cyrano Yes, yes

Roxane You will be his friend?

Cyrano I will!

Roxane And never shall he have to fight a duel?

Cyrano I swear it

Roxane Oh, I quite love you! . . . Now I must go [*She hurriedly resumes her mask, throws a veil over her head, says absentmindedly*] But you have not yet told me about last night's encounter It must have been amazing! Tell him to write to me [*She kisses her hand to him*] I love you dearly!

Cyrano Yes, yes

Roxane A hundred men against you?

Well, adieu We are fast friends

Cyrano Yes, yes

Roxane Tell him to write me! . A hundred men! You shall tell me another

time I must not linger now . . . A hundred men! What a heroic thing to do!

*Cyrano* [bowing] Oh, I have done better since!

[*Exit ROXANE* CYRANO stands motionless, staring at the ground  
*Silence* The door at the right opens *RAGUENEAU* thrusts in his head]

*Ragueneau* May we come back?

*Cyrano* [without moving] Yes . . .

[*RAGUENEAU* beckons, his friends come in again At the same time, in the doorway at the back, appears *CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX*, costume of a Captain of the Guards On seeing CYRANO, he gesticulates exaggeratedly by way of signal to some one out of sight]

*Carbon de Castel-Jaloux* He is here!

*Cyrano* [looking up] Captain!

*Carbon de Castel-Jaloux* [exultant] Hero! We know all! . . . About thirty of my cadets are out there! . . .

*Cyrano* [drawing back] But . . .

*Carbon de Castel-Jaloux* [trying to lead him off] Come! . . . You are in request!

*Cyrano* No!

*Carbon de Castel-Jaloux* They are drinking across the way, at the Cross of the Hilt

*Cyrano* I . . .

*Carbon de Castel-Jaloux* [going to the door and shouting toward the street corner, in a voice of thunder] The hero refuses He is not in the humor!

A Voice [outside] Ah, sandrous! . . .

[*Tumult outside, noise of clanking swords and of boots drawing nearer*]

*Carbon de Castel-Jaloux* [rubbing his hands] Here they come, across the street . . .

*The Cadets* [entering the cookshop]. Mille dious! . . . Capdedious! . . . Mordious! . . . Pocapdedious! . . .

*Ragueneau* [backing in alarm]. Messieurs, are you all natives of Gascony?

*The Cadets* All!

One of the Cadets [to CYRANO] Bravo!

*Cyrano* Baron!

Other Cadet [shaking both CYRANO'S hands] Vivat!

*Cyrano* Baron!

*Thrd Cadet* Let me hug you to my heart!

*Cyrano* Baron!

*Several Gascons* Let us hug him!

*Cyrano* [not knowing which one to answer] Baron! . . . baron! . . . your pardon!

*Ragueneau*. Messieurs, are you all barons?

*The Cadets*. All!

*Ragueneau* Are they truly?

*First Cadet*. Our coats of arms piled up would dwindle in the clouds!

*Le Bret* [entering, running to CYRANO] They are looking for you! A crowd, gone mad as March, led by those who were with you last night

*Cyrano* [alarmed]. You never told them where to find me? . . .

*Le Bret* [rubbing his hands]. I did.

A Burgher [entering, followed by a number of others] Monsieur, the Marais is coming in a body!

[*The street outside has filled with people Sedan-chairs, coaches stop before the door*]

*Le Bret* [smiling, low to CYRANO]. And Roxane?

*Cyrano* [quickly] Be quiet!

*The Crowd* [outside] *Cyrano*!

[*A rabble bursts into the cookshop. Confusion Shouting.*]

*Ragueneau* [standing upon a table] My shop is invaded! They are breaking everything! It is glorious!

*People* [pressing round CYRANO]. My friend . . . my friend . . .

*Cyrano*. I had not so many friends . . . yesterday!

*Le Bret* This is success!

A Young Marquis [running toward CYRANO, with outstretched hands] If you knew, my dear fellow . . .

*Cyrano* Dear? . . . Fellow? . . . Where was it we stood sentinel together?

Other Marquis I wish to present you, sir, to several ladies, who are outside in my coach . . .

*Cyrano* [coldly] But you, to me, by whom will you first be presented?

*Le Bret* [astounded] But what is the matter with you?

*Cyrano* Be still!

A Man of Letters [with an inkhorn] Will you kindly favor me with the details of . . .

Cyrano No  
*Le Bret* [nudging him] That is Theophrastus Renaudot, the inventor of the gazette

Cyrano Enough!  
*Le Bret* A sheet close packed with various information! It is an idea, they say, likely to take firm root and flourish!

A Poet [coming forward] Monsieur . . .  
 Cyrano Another!

The Poet I am anxious to make a pentacrostic on your name

Somebody Else [likewise approaching CYRANO] Monsieur . . .

Cyrano Enough, I say!

[At the gesture of impatience which CYRANO cannot repress, the crowd draws away]

[DE GUICHE appears, escorted by officers, among them CUIGY, BEISSAILE, those who followed CYRANO at the end of the first act CUIGY hurries toward CYRANO]

Cuigy [to CYRANO] Monsieur de Guiche!  
 [Murmurs Every one draws back] He comes at the request of the Marshal de Gassion

De Guiche [bowing to CYRANO] Who wishes to express his admiration for your latest exploit, the fame of which has reached him

The Crowd Bravo!

Cyrano [bowing] The Marshal is qualified to judge of courage

De Guiche He would scarcely have believed the report, had these gentlemen not been able to swear they had seen the deed performed

Cuigy With our own eyes!

Le Bret [low to CYRANO, who wears an abstracted air] But . . .

Cyrano Be silent!

Le Bret You appear to be suffering . . .

Cyrano [starting, and straightening himself] Before these people? [His moustache bristles, he expands his chest] I suffering? You shall see!

De Guiche [in whose ear CUIGY has been whispering] But this is by no means the first gallant achievement marking your career You serve in the madcap Gascon company, do you not?

Cyrano In the cadets, yes

One of the Cadets [in a great voice]. Among his countrymen!

De Guiche [considering the GASCONS, in line behind CYRANO] Ah, ha! — All these gentlemen, then, of the formidable aspect, are the famous

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux Cyrano!

Cyrano Captain?

Carbon de Castel-Jaloux My company, I believe, is here in total Be so obliging as to present it to the Count

Cyrano [taking a step toward DE GUICHE, and pointing at the CADETS]

They are the Gascony Cadets  
 Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux,  
 Famed fighters, hars, desperates,  
 They are the Gascony Cadets!  
 All, better-born than pickpockets,  
 Talk couchant, rampant, pendent, too!  
 They are the Gascony Cadets  
 Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux!

Cat-whiskered, eyed like falconets,  
 Wolf-toothed and heron-legged, they hew  
 The rabble down that snarls and threatens . . .  
 Cat-whiskered, eyed like falconets,  
 Great pomp of plume hides and offsets  
 Holes in those hats they wear askew . . .  
 Cat-whiskered, eyed like falconets,  
 They drive the snarling mob, and hew!

The mildest of their sobriquets  
 Are Crack-my-crown and Run-me-through,  
 Mad drunk on glory Gascon gets!  
 These boasters of soft sobriquets  
 Wherever rapier rapier whets  
 Are met in punctual rendezvous . . .  
 The mildest of their sobriquets  
 Are Crack-my-crown and Run-me-through!

They are the Gascony Cadets  
 That give the jealous spouse his due!  
 Lean forth, adorable coquettes,  
 They are the Gascony Cadets,  
 With plumes and scarfs and aigulets!  
 The husband gray may well look blue . . .  
 They are the Gascony Cadets  
 That give the jealous spouse his due!

De Guiche [nonchalantly seated in an armchair which RAGUENEAU has hurriedly brought for him] A gentleman provides himself to-day, by way of luxury, with a poet May I look upon you as mine?

Cyrano No, your lordship, as nobody's  
 De Guiche My uncle Richelieu yester-

day found your spontaneity diverting I shall be pleased to be of use to you with him

*Le Bret* [dazzled]. Great God!

*De Guiche* I cannot think I am wrong in supposing that you have rhymed a tragedy?

*Le Bret* [whispering to CYRANO]. My boy, your Agrippina will be played!

*De Guiche* Take it to him . .

*Cyrano* [tempted and pleased]. Really

*De Guiche*. He has taste in such matters He will no more than, here and there, alter a word, recast a passage

*Cyrano* [whose face has instantly darkened] Not to be considered, monsieur! My blood runs cold at the thought of a single comma added or suppressed

*De Guiche* On the other hand, my dear sir, when a verse finds favor with him, he pays for it handsomely

*Cyrano* He scarcely can pay me as I pay myself, when I have achieved a verse to my liking, by singing it over to myself!

*De Guiche* You are proud

*Cyrano* You have observed it?

*One of the Cadets* [coming in with a number of disreputable, draggled, tattered hats threaded on his sword] Look, Cyrano! at the remarkable feathered game we secured this morning near the Porte de Nesle! The hats of the fugitives!

*Carbon de Castel-Jaloux* *Spolæ opimæ!*

All [laughing] Ha! Ha! Ha! . .

*Cugy* The one who planned that military action, my word! must be proud of it to-day!

*Brissaille* Is it known who did it?

*De Guiche* I—[The laughter stops short] They had instructions to chastise—a matter one does not attend to in person,—a drunken scribbler

[Constrained silence]

*The Cadet* [under breath, to CYRANO, indicating the hats] What can we do with them? They are only . . . Make them into a hotch pot?

*Cyrano* [taking the sword with the hats, and bowing, as he shakes them off at DE GUICHE'S feet] Monsieur, if you should care to return them to your friends?

*De Guiche* [rises, and in a curt tone] My chair and bearers, at once [To CYRANO, violently] As for you, sir .

*A Voice* [in the street, shouting]. The chairmen of Monseigneur the Comte de Guiche!

*De Guiche* [who has recovered control over himself, with a smile] Have you read Don Quixote?

*Cyrano* I have And at the name of that divine madman, I uncover .

*De Guiche* My advice to you is to ponder .

*A Chairman* [appearing at the back] The chair is at the door!

*De Guiche* The chapter of the wind mills

*Cyrano* [bowing] Chapter thirteen

*De Guiche* For when a man attacks them, it often happens

*Cyrano* I have attacked, am I to infer, a thing that veers with every wind?

*De Guiche* That one of their far-reaching canvas arms pitches him down into the mud!

*Cyrano* Or up among the stars!

[Exit DE GUICHE He is seen getting into his chair The gentlemen withdraw whispering LE BRET goes to the door with them The crowd leaves The CADETS remain seated at the right and left at tables where food and drink is brought to them]

*Cyrano* [bowing with a derisive air to those who leave without daring to take leave of him] Gentlemen gentlemen gentlemen

*Le Bret* [coming forward, greatly distressed, lifting his hands to Heaven] Oh, in what a pretty pair of shoes

*Cyrano* Oh, you! . . . I expect you to grumble!

*Le Bret* But yourself, you will agree with me that invariably to cut the throat of opportunity becomes an exaggeration! .

*Cyrano* Yes I agree I do exaggerate

*Le Bret* [triumphant] You see, you admit it!

*Cyrano* But for the sake of principle, and of example, as well, I think it a good thing to exaggerate as I do!

*Le Bret* Could you but leave apart, once in a while, your mousquetaire of a soul, fortune, undoubtedly, fame .

*Cyrano* And what should a man do? Seek some grandee, take him for patron, and like the obscure creeper clasping a

tree-trunk, and licking the bark of that which props it up, attain to height by craft instead of strength? No, I thank you. Dedicate, as they all do, poems to financiers? Wear motley in the humble hope of seeing the lips of a minister distend for once in a smile not ominous of ill? No, I thank you. Eat every day a toad? Be threadbare at the belly with grovelling? Have his skin dirty soonest at the knees? Practice feats of dorsal elasticity? No, I thank you. With one hand stroke the goat while with the other he waters the cabbage? Make gifts of senna that counter-gifts of rhubarb may accrue, and indefatigably swing his censor in some beard? No, I thank you. Push himself from lap to lap, become a little great man in a great little circle, propel his ship with madrigals for oars and in his sails the sighs of the elderly ladies? No, I thank you. Get the good editor Sercy to print his verses at proper expense? No, I thank you. Contrive to be nominated Pope in conclaves held by imbeciles in wineshops? No, I thank you. Work to construct a name upon the basis of a sonnet, instead of constructing other sonnets? No, I thank you. Discover talent in tyros, and in them alone? Stand in terror of what gazettes may please to say, and say to himself, "At whatever cost, may I figure in the *Paris Mercury*!" No, I thank you. Calculate, cringe, peak, solicit, apply? No, I thank you! No, I thank you! No, I thank you! But sing, dream, laugh, loaf, be single, be free, have eyes that look squarely, a voice with a ring, wear, if he chooses, his hat hindside afore, for a yes, for a no, fight a duel or turn a ditty! . . . Work, without concern of fortune or of glory, to accomplish the heart's-desired journey to the moon! Put forth nothing that has not its spring in the very heart, yet, modest, say to himself, "Old man, be satisfied with blossoms, fruits, yea, leaves alone, so they be gathered in your garden and not another man's!" Then, if it happen that to some small extent he triumph, be obliged to render of the glory, to Cæsar, not one jot, but honestly appropriate it all. In short, scorning to be the parasite, the creeper, if even failing to be the oak, rise, not perchance to a great height, but rise alone!

*Le Bret* Alone? Good! but not one against all! How the devil did you contract the mania that possesses you for making enemies, always, everywhere?

*Cyrano* By seeing you make friends, and smile to those same flocks of friends with a mouth that takes for model an old purse! I wish not to be troubled to return bows in the street, and I exclaim with glee, "An enemy the more!"

*Le Bret* This is mental aberration!

*Cyrano* I do not dispute it. I am so framed. To displease is my pleasure. I love that one should hate me. Dear friend, if you but knew how much better a man walks under the exciting fire of hostile eyes, and how amused he may become over the spots on his doublet, spattered by Envy and Cowardice! You, the facile friendship wherewith you surround yourself, resembles those wide Italian collars, loose and easy, with a perforated pattern, in which the neck looks like a woman's. They are more comfortable, but of less high effect, for the brow not held in proud position by any constraint from them, falls to nodding this way and that. But for me every day Hatred starches and flutes the ruff whose stiffness holds the head well in place. Every new enemy is another plait in it, adding compulsion, but adding, as well, a ray for, similar in every point to the Spanish ruff, Hatred is a bondage, but is a halo, too!

*Le Bret* [after a pause, slipping his arm through CYRANO'S] To the hearing of all be proud and bitter, but to me, below breath, say simply that she does not love you!

*Cyrano* [sharply] Not a word!

[CHRISTIAN has come in and mingled with the CADETS, they ignore him, he has finally gone to a little table by himself, where LISE waits on him.]

One of the Cadets [seated at a table at the back, glass in hand] Hey, Cyrano! [CYRANO turns toward him] Your story!

*Cyrano* Presently!

[He goes toward the back on LE BRET'S arm. They talk low.]

The Cadet [rising and coming toward the front] The account of your fight! It will be the best lesson [stopping in front of

*the table at which CHRISTIAN is sitting] for this timorous novice!*

*Christian [looking up] . . . Novice?*

*Other Cadet* Yes, sickly product of the North!

*Christian* Sickly?

*First Cadet [impressively]* Monsieur de Neuville, it is a good deed to warn you that there is a thing no more to be mentioned in our company than rope in the house of the hanged!

*Christian* And what is it?

*Other Cadet [in a terrifying voice]* Look at me! *[Three times, darkly, he places his finger upon his nose]* You have understood?

*Christian* Ah, it is the . . .

*Other Cadet* Silence! . . . Never must you so much as breathe that word, or . . . *[He points toward CYRANO at the back talking with LE BRET]* You will have him, over there, to deal with!

*Other Cadet [who while CHRISTIAN was turned toward the first, has noiselessly seated himself on the table behind him].* Two persons were lately cut off in their pride by him for talking through their noses. He thought it personal.

*Other Cadet [in a cavernous voice, as he rises from under the table where he had slipped on all fours]* Not the remotest allusion, ever, to the fatal cartilage, . . . unless you fancy an early grave!

*Other Cadet* A word will do the business! What did I say? . . . A word? . . . A simple gesture! Make use of your pocket-handkerchief, you will shortly have use for your shroud!

*[Silence All around CHRISTIAN watch him, with folded arms. He rises and goes to CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX, who, in conversation with an officer, affects to notice nothing.]*

*Christian* Captain!

*Carbon [turning and looking him rather contemptuously up and down]* Monsieur?

*Christian* What is the proper course for a man when he finds gentlemen of the South too boastful?

*Carbon de Castel-Jaloux* He must prove to them that one can be of the North, yet brave *[He turns his back upon him]*

*Christian* I am much obliged.

*First Cadet [to CYRANO].* And now, the tale of your adventure!

*All* Yes, yes, now let us hear!

*Cyrano [coming forward among them]* My adventure? *[All draw their stools nearer, and sit around him, with craned necks. CHRISTIAN sits astride a chair]* Well, then, I was marching to meet them. The moon up in the skies was shining like a silver watch, when suddenly I know not what careful watch-maker having wrapped it in a cottony cloud, there occurred the blackest imaginable night, and, the streets being nowise lighted,—*mordious!*—you could see no further than . . .

*Christian* Your nose

*[Silence Every one slowly gets up, all look with terror at CYRANO. He has stopped short, amazed. Pause]*

*Cyrano* Who is that man?

*One of the Cadets [low]* He joined this morning

*Cyrano [taking a step toward CHRISTIAN]* This morning?

*Carbon de Castel-Jaloux [low]* His name is Baron de Neuville . . .

*Cyrano [stopping short]* Ah, very well . . . *[He turns pale, then red, gives evidence of another impulse to throw himself upon CHRISTIAN]* I . . . *[He conquers it and says in a stifled voice]* Very well. *[He takes up his tale]* As I was saying . . . *[with a burst of rage]* *Mordious!* *[He continues in a natural tone]* one could not see in the very least *[Consternation All resume their seats, staring at one another]* And I was walking along, reflecting that for a very insignificant rogue I was probably about to offend some great prince who would bear me a lasting grudge, that, in brief, I was about to thrust my . . .

*Christian* Nose . . .

*[All get up. CHRISTIAN has tilted his chair and is rocking on the hind legs]*

*Cyrano [choking]* Finger . . . between the tree and the bark, for the aforesaid prince might be of sufficient power to trip me and throw me

*Christian* On my nose . . .

*Cyrano [wipes the sweat from his brow]* But, said I, "Gascony forward! Never falter when duty prompts! Forward, Cyrano!" and, saying this, I advance—



when suddenly, in the darkness, I barely avoid a blow

*Christian* Upon the nose . . .

*Cyrano* I ward it . . . and thereupon find myself

*Christian* Nose to nose . . .

*Cyrano* [springing toward him] *Ventre-Saint-Gris!* [All the GASCONS rush forward, to see, CYRANO, on reaching CHRISTIAN, controls himself and proceeds] . . with a hundred drunken brawlers, smelling .

*Christian* To the nose's limit . . .

*Cyrano* [deathly pale, and smiling] . . . of garlic and of grease I leap forward, head lowered

*Christian* Nose to the wind! . . .

*Cyrano* And I charge them I knock two breathless and run a third through the body One lets off at me Paf! and I retort

*Christian* Pif!

*Cyrano* [exploding] Death and damnation! Go,—all of you!

[All the CADETS make for the door]

*First Cadet* The tiger is roused at last!

*Cyrano* All! and leave me with this man

*Second Cadet* *Bigre!* When we see him again, it will be in the shape of mince-meat!

*Ragueneau* Mince-meat? .

*Other Cadet* In one of your pies.

*Ragueneau* I feel myself grow white and flabby as a table-napkin!

*Carbon de Castel-Jaloux* Let us go!

*Other Cadet* Not a smudge of him will be left!

*Other Cadet* What these walls are about to behold gives me gooseflesh to think upon!

*Other Cadet* [closing the door at the right]. Ghastly! Ghastly!

[All have left, by the back or the sides, a few up the stairway CYRANO and CHRISTIAN remain face to face, and look at each other a moment]

*Cyrano* Embrace me!

*Christian* Monsieur . . .

*Cyrano* Brave fellow

*Christian* But what does this . . .

*Cyrano* Very brave fellow I wish you to

*Christian* Will you tell me?

*Cyrano* Embrace me, I am her brother.

*Christian* Whose?

*Cyrano* Hers!

*Christian* What do you mean?

*Cyrano* Roxane's!

*Christian* [running to him] Heavens! You, her brother?

*Cyrano* Or the same thing her first cousin

*Christian* And she has . .

*Cyrano* Told me everything!

*Christian* Does she love me?

*Cyrano* Perhaps!

*Christian* [seizing his hands] How happy I am, monsieur, to make your acquaintance!

*Cyrano* That is what I call a sudden sentiment!

*Christian* Forgive me! . . .

*Cyrano* [looking at him, laying his hand upon his shoulder] It is true that he is handsome, the rascal!

*Christian* If you but knew, monsieur, how greatly I admire you! . .

*Cyrano* But all those noses which you . . .

*Christian* I take them back!

*Cyrano* Roxane expects a letter to-night .

*Christian* Alas!

*Cyrano* What is the matter?

*Christian* I am lost if I cease to be dumb!

*Cyrano* How is that?

*Christian* Alas! I am such a dunce that I could kill myself for shame!

*Cyrano* But no . no You are surely not a dunce, if you believe you are! Besides, you scarcely attacked me like a dunce

*Christian*. Oh, it is easy to find words in mounting to the assault! Indeed, I own to a certain cheap military readiness, but when I am before women, I have not a word to say Yet their eyes, when I pass by, express a kindness toward me . .

*Cyrano* And do their hearts not express the same when you stop beside them?

*Christian* No! for I am of those—I recognize it, and am dismayed!—who do not know how to talk of love

*Cyrano* *Tiens!* It seems to me that if Nature had taken more pains with my shape, I should have been of those who do know how to talk of it



*Christian* Oh, to be able to express things gracefully!

*Cyrano*. Oh, to be a graceful little figure of a passing mousquetaire!

*Christian* Roxane is a précieuse, there is no chance but that I shall be a disillusion to Roxane!

*Cyrano* [*looking at CHRISTIAN*] If I had, to express my soul, such an interpreter!

*Christian* [*desperately*]. I ought to have eloquence!

*Cyrano* [*abruptly*]. Eloquence I will lend you! . . . And you, to me, shall lend all-conquering physical charm . . . and between us we will compose a hero of romance!

*Christian* What?

*Cyrano* Should you be able to say, as your own, things which I day by day would teach you?

*Christian* You are suggesting?

*Cyrano*. Roxane shall not have disillusion! Tell me, shall we win her heart, we two as one will you submit to feel, transmitted from my leather doublet into your doublet stitched with silk, the soul I wish to share?

*Christian* But Cyrano! . . .

*Cyrano* Christian, will you?

*Christian* You frighten me!

*Cyrano* Since you fear, left to yourself, to chill her heart, will you consent,—and soon it will take fire, I vouch for it!—to contribute your lips to my phrases?

*Christian* Your eyes shine! . . .

*Cyrano* Will you?

*Christian* What, would it please you so much?

*Cyrano* [*with rapture*] It would [*remembering, and confining himself to expressing an artistic pleasure*] . . . amuse me! It is an experiment fit surely to tempt a poet Will you complete me, and let me in exchange complete you? We will walk side by side you in full light, I in your shadow . . . I will be wit to you . . . you, to me, shall be good looks!

*Christian* But the letter, which should be sent to her without delay? . . . Never shall I be able

*Cyrano* [*taking from his doublet the letter written in the first part of the act*] The letter? Here it is!

*Christian* How? . . .

*Cyrano* It only wants the address

*Christian* I . . .

*Cyrano* You can send it without uneasiness It is a good letter.

*Christian* You had? . . .

*Cyrano* You shall never find us—poets!—without epistles in our pockets to the Chlorises . . . of our imagining! For we are those same that have for mistress a dream blown into the bubble of a name! Take,—you shall convert this feigning into earnest, I was sending forth at random these confessions and laments, you shall make the wandering birds to settle Take it! You shall see . . . I was as eloquent as if I had been sincere! Take, and have done!

*Christian* But will it not need to be altered in any part? . . . Written without object, will it fit Roxane?

*Cyrano* Like a glove!

*Christian* But . . .

*Cyrano* Trust to the blindness of love and vanity! Roxane will never question that it was written for her

*Christian* Ah, my friend! [*He throws himself into CYRANO'S arms They stand embraced*]

*One of the Cadets* [*opening the door a very little*] Nothing more . . . The stillness of death . . . I dare not look . . . [*He thrusts in his head*] What is this?

*All the Cadets* [*entering and seeing CYRANO and CHRISTIAN locked in each other's arms*] Ah! Oh!

*One of the Cadets*. This passes bounds!

[*Consternation*]

*The Mousquetaire* [*impudent*] Quais?

*Carbon de Castel-Jaloux* Our demon is waxen mild as an apostle, smitten upon one nostril, he turns the other also!

*The Mousquetaire* It is in order now to speak of his nose, is it? [*Calling LISE, with a swaggering air*] Hey, Lise! now listen and look [*Pointedly sniffing the air*] Oh, oh, it is surprising! . . . what an odor! [*Going to CYRANO*] But monsieur must have smelled it, too? Can you tell me what it is, so plain in the air?

*Cyrano* [*beating him*] Why, sundry blows!

[*Joyful antics of the CADETS in beholding CYRANO himself again*]

## ACT THREE

## ROXANE'S KISS

*A small square in the old Marais Old-fashioned houses Narrow streets seen in perspective At the right, ROXANE's house and the wall of her garden, above which spreading tree-tops Over the house-door, a balcony and window A bench beside the doorstep*

*The wall is overclambered by ivy, the balcony wreathed with jasmine*

*By means of the bench and projecting stones in the wall, the balcony can easily be scaled*

*On the opposite side, old house in the same style of architecture, brick and stone, with entrance-door The door-knocker is swaddled in linen*

*At the rise of the curtain, the DUENNA is seated on the bench The window on ROXANE's balcony is wide open*

*RAGUENEAU, in a sort of livery, stands near the DUENNA, he is finishing the tale of his misfortunes, drying his eyes*

*Ragueneau* And then, she eloped with a mousquetaire! Ruined, forsaken, I was hanging myself I had already taken leave of earth, when Monsieur de Bergerac happening along, unhanged me, and proposed me to his cousin as her steward . .

*The Duenna* But how did you fall into such disaster?

*Ragueneau* Lise was fond of soldiers, I, of poets! Mars ate up all left over by Apollo Under those circumstances, you conceive, the pantry soon was bare

*The Duenna* [rising and calling toward the open window] Roxane, are you ready?

They are waiting for us!

*Roxane's Voice* [through the window] I am putting on my mantle!

*The Duenna* [to RAGUENEAU, pointing at the door opposite] It is over there, opposite, we are expected At Clomire's She holds a meeting in her little place A disquisition upon the Softer Sentiments is to be read

*Ragueneau* Upon the Softer Sentiments?

*The Duenna* [coolly] Yes! [Calling toward the window] Roxane, you must make haste, or we shall miss the disquisition upon the Softer Sentiments!

*Roxane's Voice* I am coming!

[A sound of string-instruments is heard, drawing nearer]

*Cyrano's Voice* [singing in the wings] La! la! la! la! la!

*The Duenna* [surprised] We are to have music?

*Cyrano* [enters followed by two PAGES with theorbos] I tell you it is a demi-semi-quaver! you demi-semi-noddle!

*First Page* [ironically] Monsieur knows then about quavers, semi and demi?

*Cyrano* I know music, as do all Gassendi's disciples!

*The Page* [playing and singing] La! la!

*Cyrano* [snatching the theorbo from him and continuing the musical phrase] I can carry on the melody La, la, la, la, .

*Roxane* [appearing on the balcony] It is you?

*Cyrano* [singing upon the tune he is continuing] I, indeed, who salute your likes and present my respects to your ro-oses!

*Roxane* I am coming down [She leaves the balcony]

*The Duenna* [pointing at the PAGES] What is the meaning of these two virtuosos?

*Cyrano* A wager I won, from D'As-soucy We were disputing upon a question of grammar Yes! No! Yes! No! Suddenly pointing at these two tall knaves, expert at clawing strings, by whom he constantly goes attended, he said, "I wager a day long of music!" He lost Until therefore the next rise of the sun, I shall have dangling after me these arch-lute players, harmonious witnesses of all I do! At first I liked it very well, but now it palls a little [To the musicians] Hey! Go, from me to Montfleury, and play him a pavane! [The PAGES go toward the back To the DUENNA] I have come to inquire of Roxane, as I do every evening [To the PAGES who are leaving] Play a long time and out of tune! [To the DUENNA] whether in the friend of her soul she can still detect no fault?

*Roxane* [coming out of the house] Ah, how beautiful he is, what wit he has, how deeply I love him!

*Cyrano* [smiling] Christian has so much wit?

*Roxane* Cousin, more than yourself!

*Cyrano* I grant you

*Roxane* There is not one alive, I truly believe, more apt at turning those pretty nothings which yet are everything. Sometimes he is of an absent mood, his muse is wool-gathering, then, suddenly, he will say the most enchanting things!

*Cyrano* [incredulous] Come! . . .

*Roxane* Oh, it is too bad! Men are all alike, narrow, narrow because he is handsome, he cannot possibly be witty!

*Cyrano* So he talks of the heart in acceptable fashion?

*Roxane* Talks, cousin, is feeble. . . . He dissertates!

*Cyrano* And writes? . . .

*Roxane* Still better! Listen now to this . . . [Declaring] "*The more of my heart you steal from me, the more heart I have!*" [Triumphantly to CYRANO] Well? . . .

*Cyrano* Pooh!

*Roxane* And to this "*Since you have stolen my heart, and since I must suffer, to suffer with send me your own!*"

*Cyrano* Now he has too much heart, now he has not enough, . . . just what does he want, in the matter of quantity?

*Roxane* You vex me! You are eaten up with jealousy . . .

*Cyrano* [starting] Hem?

*Roxane* Author's jealousy! And this, could anything be more exquisitely tender? "*Unanimously, believe it, my heart cries out to you, and if kisses could be sent in writing, Love, you should read my letter with your lips . . .*"

*Cyrano* [in spite of himself smiling with satisfaction]. Ha! Ha! Those particular lines seem to me . . . ho! ho! . . . [remembering himself, disdainfully] . . . puny, pretty . . .

*Roxane* This, then . . .

*Cyrano* [delighted]. You know his letters by heart?

*Roxane* All!

*Cyrano* It is flattering, one cannot deny

*Roxane* In this art of expressing love he is a master!

*Cyrano* [modest] Oh, . . . a master!

*Roxane* [peremptory] A master!

*Cyrano* As you please, then . . . a master!

*The Duenna* [who had gone toward the back, coming quickly forward] Monsieur de Guiche! [To CYRANO, pushing him toward the house] Go in! It is perhaps

better that he should not see you here! it might put him on the scent . . .

*Roxane* [to CYRANO] Yes, of my dear secret! He loves me, he is powerful, . . . he must not find out! He might cut in sunder our loves with an axe!

*Cyrano* [going into the house]. Very well, very well

[DE GUICHE appears]

*Roxane* [to DE GUICHE, with a curtsy]. I was leaving the house

*De Guiche* I have come to bid you farewell

*Roxane* You are going away?

*De Guiche* To war

*Roxane* Ah!

*De Guiche*. I have my orders. Arras is besieged

*Roxane* Ah! . . . It is besieged?

*De Guiche* Yes . . . I see that my departure does not greatly affect you

*Roxane* Oh!

*De Guiche* As for me, I own it wrings my heart. Shall I see you again? . . . When? You know that I am made commander-in-general?

*Roxane* [uninterested]. I congratulate you

*De Guiche* Of the Guards.

*Roxane* [starting] Ah, . . . of the Guards?

*De Guiche* Among whom your cousin serves, . . . the man of the boasts and tirades. I shall have opportunity in plenty to retaliate upon him down there

*Roxane* [suffocating] What? The Guards are going down there?

*De Guiche* Surely. It is my regiment

*Roxane* [falls sitting upon the bench, aside] Christian!

*De Guiche* What is it troubles you?

*Roxane* [greatly moved] This departure . . . grieves me mortally. When one cares for a person . . . to know him away at the war!

*De Guiche* [surprised and charmed]. For the first time you utter a kind and feeling word, when I am leaving!

*Roxane* [in a different tone, fanning herself] So . . . you are thinking of revenge upon my cousin?

*De Guiche* [smiling] You side with him?

*Roxane* No . . . against him

*De Guiche* Do you see much of him?

*Roxane* Very little.

*De Guiche* He is everywhere to be met with one of the cadets [*trying to remember*] that Neu . . . villen . . . viller

*Roxane* A tall man?

*De Guiche* Light-haired.

*Roxane* Red-haired.

*De Guiche* Good-looking

*Roxane* Pooh!

*De Guiche* But a fool!

*Roxane* He looks like one [*In a different tone*] Your vengeance upon Cyrano is then to place him within reach of shot, which is the thing of all he loves! A miserable vengeance! . . . I know, I do, what would more seriously concern him!

*De Guiche* And that is?

*Roxane* Why . . . that the regiment should march, and leave him behind, with his beloved cadets, arms folded, the whole war through, in Paris! That is the only way to cast down a man like him. You wish to punish him? Deprive him of danger

*De Guiche* A woman! A woman! None but a woman could devise a vengeance of the sort!

*Roxane* His friends will gnaw their fists, and he his very soul, with chagrin at not being under fire, and you will be abundantly avenged!

*De Guiche* [*coming nearer*] Then you do love me a little? [*ROXANE smiles*] I wish to see in this fact of your espousing my grudge a proof of affection, Roxane . . .

*Roxane* You may!

*De Guiche* [*showing several folded papers*] I have here upon me the orders to be transmitted at once to each of the companies . . . except . . . [*he takes one from among the others*] This one! . . . the company of the cadets [*He puts it in his pocket*] This, I will keep [*Laughing*] Ah, ah, ah! Cyrano! his belligerent humor! So you sometimes play tricks upon people, you? . . .

*Roxane* Sometimes

*De Guiche* [*very near her*] I love you to distraction! This evening listen, it is true that I must be gone. But to go when I feel that it is a matter for your caring! Listen! There is, not far from here, in Rue Orléans, a convent founded by the Capuchins. Father Athanasius. A layman may not enter. But the

good fathers . . . I fear no difficulty with them! They will hide me up their sleeve. Their sleeve is wide. They are the Capuchins that serve Richelieu at home. Fearing the uncle, they proportionately fear the nephew. I shall be thought to have left. I will come to you masked. Let me delay by a single day, wayward enchantress!

*Roxane* But if it should transpire . . . your fame

*De Guiche* Bah!

*Roxane*. But . . . the siege . . . Arras!

*De Guiche*. Must wait! Allow me, I beg . . .

*Roxane*. No!

*De Guiche* I beseech!

*Roxane* [*tenderly*]. No! Love itself bids me forbid you!

*De Guiche* Ah!

*Roxane*. You must go! [*Aside*] Christian will stay! [*Aloud*] For my sake, be heroic . . . Antony!

*De Guiche* Ah, heavenly word upon your lips! . . . Then you love the one who

*Roxane*. Who shall have made me tremble for his sake . . .

*De Guiche* [*in a transport of joy*] Ah, I will go! [*He kisses her hand*] Are you satisfied with me?

*Roxane* My friend, I am

[*Exit DE GUICHE*]

*The Duenna* [*dropping a mocking curlsey toward his back*] My friend, we are!

*Roxane* [*to the DUENNA*]. Not a word of what I have done. Cyrano would never forgive me for defrauding him of his war! [*She calls toward the house*] Cousin! [*CYRANO comes out*] We are going to Clomire's. [*She indicates the house opposite*] Alcandre has engaged to speak, and so has Lysimon.

*The Duenna* [*putting her little finger to her ear*] Yes, but my little finger tells me that we shall be too late to hear them!

*Cyrano* [*to ROXANE*]. Of all things do not miss the trained monkeys!

[*They have reached CLOMIRE'S door*]

*The Duenna* See! See! they have muffled the door-knocker! [*To the door-knocker*] You have been gagged, that your voice should not disturb the beau-

eful lecture, little brutal disturber!  
[*She lifts it with infinite care and knocks softly*]

Roxane [*seeing the door open*] Come!  
[*From the threshold to CYRANO*] If Christian should come, as probably he will, say he must wait!

Cyrano [*hurriedly, as she is about to disappear*]. Ah! [*She turns*] Upon what shall you, according to your custom, question him to-day?

Roxane Upon .

Cyrano [*eagerly*] Upon? . . .

Roxane But you will be silent . . .

Cyrano As that wall!

Roxane. Upon nothing! I will say Forward! Free rein! No curb! Improvise! Talk of love! Be magnificent!

Cyrano [*smiling*]. Good.

Roxane. Hush!

Cyrano. Hush!

Roxane. Not a word! [*She goes in and closes the door*]

Cyrano [*bowing, when the door is closed*]  
A thousand thanks!

[*The door opens again and ROXANE looks out*]

Roxane. He might prepare his speeches

Cyrano Ah, no! . . . the devil, no!

Both [*together*]. Hush!

[*The door closes*]

Cyrano [*calling*] Christian! [*Enter CHRISTIAN*] I know all that we need to. Now make ready your memory This is your chance to cover yourself with glory Let us lose no time Do not look sullen, like that Quick! Let us go to your lodgings and I will rehearse you . . .

Christian No!

Cyrano. What?

Christian No, I will await Roxane here

Cyrano What insanity possesses you? Come quickly and learn . . .

Christian No, I tell you! I am weary of borrowing my letters, my words of playing a part, and living in constant fear It was very well at first, but now I feel that she loves me I thank you heartily I am no longer afraid I will speak for myself . . .

Cyrano Ours?

Christian And what tells you that I shall not know how? I am not such an utter blockhead, after all! You shall see!

Your lessons have not been altogether wasted I can shift to speak without your aid! And, that failing, by Heaven! I shall still know enough to take her in my arms! [*Catching sight of ROXANE who is coming out from CLOMIRE'S*] She is coming! Cyrano, no, do not leave me! . . .

Cyrano [*bowing to him*] I will not meddle, monsieur [*He disappears behind the garden wall*]

Roxane [*coming from Clomire's house with a number of people from whom she is taking leave. Curtseys and farewells*] Barthénoides! . . . Alcandre! . . . Grémionel! . . .

The Duenna [*comically desperate*] We missed the disquisition upon the Softer Sentiments! [*She goes into ROXANE'S house*]

Roxane [*still taking leave of this one and that*] Urimédonte! . . . Good-bye!

[*All bow to ROXANE, to one another, separate and go off by the various streets. ROXANE sees CHRISTIAN*]

Roxane You are here! [*She goes to him*] Evening is closing round Wait!

. They have all gone . . . The air is so mild . . . Not a passer in sight Let us sit here . . . Talk! I will listen

Christian [*sits beside her, on the bench*] Silence! I love you

Roxane [*closing her eyes*]. Yes Talk to me of love

Christian. I love you

Roxane Yes That is the theme Play variations upon it

Christian I love . . .

Roxane Variations!

Christian I love you so much

Roxane I do not doubt it What further? .

Christian And further . I should be so happy if you loved me! Tell me, Roxane, that you love me . . .

Roxane [*pouting*] You proffer cider to me when I was hoping for champagne! . Now tell me a little how you love me?

Christian Why . . . very, very much

Roxane Oh! unravel, disentangle your sentiments!

Christian Your throat! . . . I want to kiss it! . . .

Roxane Christian!

Christian I love you!  
 Roxane [attempting to rise] Again!  
 Christian [hastily, holding her back] No,  
 I do not love you!

Roxane [sitting down again]. That is  
 fortunate!

Christian I adore you!  
 Roxane [rising and moving away]  
 Oh!

Christian Yes, . . . love makes me into  
 a fool!

Roxane [drily] And I am displeased at  
 it! as I should be displeased at your no  
 longer being handsome

Christian But  
 Roxane Go, and rally your routed elo-  
 quence!

Christian I  
 Roxane You love me I have heard it  
 Good-evening [She goes toward the house]

Christian No, no, not yet! . . . I wish  
 to tell you

Roxane [pushing open the door to go in].  
 That you adore me Yes, I know No!  
 No! Go away! Go! . . . Go!

Christian But I  
 [She closes the door in his face]

Cyrano [who has been on the scene a mo-  
 ment, unnoticed] Unmistakably a success

Christian Help me!  
 Cyrano No, sir, no

Christian I will go kill myself if I am  
 not taken back into favor at once at  
 once!

Cyrano And how can I how, the  
 devil? make you learn on the spot.

Christian [seizing him by the arm] Oh,  
 there! Look! See!

[Light has appeared in the balcony  
 window]

Cyrano [with emotion] Her window!

Christian Oh, I shall die!

Cyrano Not so loud!

Christian [in a whisper] I shall die!

Cyrano It is a dark night . . .

Christian Well?

Cyrano All may be mended But you  
 do not deserve There! stand there,  
 miserable boy! in front of the bal-  
 cony! I will stand under it and prompt  
 you

Christian But  
 Cyrano Do as I bid you!

The Pages [reappearing at the back, to  
 CYRANO] Hey!

Cyrano Hush! [He signs to them to  
 lower their voices]

First Page [in a lower voice] We have  
 finished serenading Montfleury!

Cyrano [low, quickly] Go and stand  
 out of sight One at this street corner, the  
 other at that, and if any one comes near,  
 play!

Second Page What sort of tune, Mon-  
 sieur the Gassendist?

Cyrano Merry if it be a woman, mourn-  
 ful if it be a man [The Pages disappear,  
 one at each street corner To CHRISTIAN]  
 Call her!

Christian Roxane!  
 Cyrano [picking up pebbles and throwing  
 them at the window-pane] Wait! A few  
 pebbles

Roxane [opening the window]. Who is  
 calling me?

Christian It is I . . .  
 Roxane Who is I?

Christian Christian!

Roxane [disdainfully] Oh, you!

Christian I wish to speak with you

Cyrano [under the balcony, to CHRIS-  
 TIAN] Speak low!

Roxane No, your conversation is too  
 common You may go home!

Christian In mercy!

Roxane No you do not love me any  
 more!

Christian [whom CYRANO is prompting]  
 You accuse me . . . just Heaven! of lov-  
 ing you no more . . . when I can love you  
 no more!

Roxane [who was about to close her win-  
 dow, stopping] Ah, that is a little better!

Christian [same business] To what a  
 . . . size has Love grown in my sigh-  
 rocked soul which the . . . cruel cherub has  
 chosen for his cradle!

Roxane [stepping nearer to the edge of  
 the balcony] That is distinctly better!  
 But, since he is so cruel, this Cupid, you  
 were unwise not to smother him in his  
 cradle!

Christian [same business] I tried to,  
 but, madame, the attempt was futile  
 This new-born Love is . . . a little  
 Hercules.

Roxane Much, much better!

Christian [same business] Who found  
 it merest baby-play to strangle the ser-  
 pents twain, Pride and . . . Mistrust.

*Roxane* [*leaning her elbows on the balcony-rail*] Ah, that is very good indeed! . But why do you speak so slowly and stuntedly? Has your imagination gout in its wings?

*Cyrano* [*drawing CHRISTIAN under the balcony, and taking his place*]. Hush! It is becoming too difficult!

*Roxane*. To-night your words come falteringly . Why is it?

*Cyrano* [*talking low like CHRISTIAN*] Because of the dark They have to grope to find your ear.

*Roxane* My words do not find the same difficulty

*Cyrano* They reach their point at once? Of course they do! That is because I catch them with my heart My heart, you see, is very large, your ear particularly small . . . Besides, your words drop . . . that goes quickly, mine have to climb . . . and that takes longer!

*Roxane* They have been climbing more nimbly, however, in the last few minutes

*Cyrano* They are becoming used to this gymnastic feat!

*Roxane* It is true that I am talking with you from a very mountain top!

*Cyrano* It is sure that a hard word dropped from such a height upon my heart would shatter it!

*Roxane* [*with the motion of leaving*]. I will come down

*Cyrano* [*quickly*]. Do not!

*Roxane* [*pointing at the bench at the foot of the balcony*] Then do you get up on the seat!

*Cyrano* [*drawing away in terror*]. No!

*Roxane* How do you mean . . . no?

*Cyrano* [*with ever-increasing emotion*] Let us profit a little by this chance of talking softly together without seeing each other . . .

*Roxane* Without seeing each other? . . .

*Cyrano* Yes, to my mind, delectable! Each guesses at the other, and no more You discern but the trailing blackness of a mantle, and I a dawn-gray glimmer which is a summer gown I am a shadow merely, a pearly phantom are you! You can never know what these moments are to me! If ever I was eloquent . . .

*Roxane* You were!

*Cyrano* My words never till now surged from my very heart . . .

*Roxane* And why?

*Cyrano* Because, till now, they must strain to reach you through . . .

*Roxane* What?

*Cyrano*. Why, the bewildering emotion a man feels who sees you, and whom you look upon! . But this evening, it seems to me that I am speaking to you for the first time!

*Roxane* It is true that your voice is altogether different

*Cyrano* [*coming nearer, feverishly*]. Yes, altogether different, because, protected by the dark, I dare at last to be myself I dare . [*He stops, and distractedly*] What was I saying? . . . I do not know

All this forgive my incoherence! is so delicious . . . is so new to me!

*Roxane* So new? . . .

*Cyrano* [*in extreme confusion, still trying to mend his expressions*] So new . yes, new, to be sincere, the fear of being mocked always constrains my heart . . .

*Roxane*. Mocked . . . for what?

*Cyrano* Why, . . . for its impulses, its flights! . . . Yes, my heart always covers behind the defence of my wit I set forth to capture a star . and then, for dread of laughter, I stop and pick a flower . . . of rhetoric!

*Roxane* That sort of flower has its pleasing points . . .

*Cyrano* But yet, to-night, let us scorn it!

*Roxane* Never before had you spoken as you are speaking!

*Cyrano* Ah, if far from Cupid-darts and quivers, we might seek a place of somewhat fresher things! If instead of drinking, flat sip by sip, from a chiselled golden thimble, drops distilled and dulcified, we might try the sensation of quenching the thirst of our souls by stooping to the level of the great river, and setting our lips to the stream!

*Roxane* But yet, wit . . . fancy . . . delicate conceits . . .

*Cyrano* I gave my fancy leave to frame conceits, before, to make you linger, . . . but now it would be an affront to this balm-breathing night, to Nature and the hour, to talk like characters in a pastoral performed at Court! Let us give Heaven leave, looking at us with all its earnest stars, to strip us of disguise and artifice I fear, . oh, fear! lest in



our mistaken alchemy sentiment should be subtilized to evaporation; lest the life of the heart should waste in these empty pastimes, and the final refinement of the fine be the undoing of the refined!

*Roxane* But yet, wit, . . . aptness, . . . ingenuity . . .

*Cyrano* I hate them in love! Criminal, when one loves, to prolong overmuch that paltry thrust and parry! The moment, however, comes inevitably,—and I pity those for whom it never comes!—in which, we apprehending the noble depth of the love we harbor, a shallow word hurts us to utter!

*Roxane* If . . . if, then, that moment has come for us two, what words will you say to me?

*Cyrano* All those, all those, all those that come to me! Not in formal nosegay order, I will throw them you in a wild sheaf! I love you, choke with love, I love you, dear . . . My brain reels, I can bear no more, it is too much . . . Your name is in my heart the golden clapper in a bell, and as I know no rest, Roxane, always the heart is shaken, and ever rings your name! . . . Of you, I remember all, all have I loved! Last year, one day, the twelfth of May, in going out at morning you changed the fashion of your hair I have taken the light of your hair for my light, and as having stared too long at the sun, on everything one sees a scarlet wheel, on everything when I come from my chosen light, my dazzled eyes set swimming golden blots! . . .

*Roxane* [in a voice unsteady with emotion] Yes . . . this is love . . .

*Cyrano* Ah, verily! The feeling which invades me, terrible and jealous, is love with all its mournful frenzy! It is love, yet self-forgetting more than the wont of love! Ah, for your happiness now readily would I give mine, though you should never know it, might I but, from a distance, sometimes, hear the happy laughter bought by my sacrifice! Every glance of yours breeds in me new strength, new valor! Are you beginning to understand? Tell me, do you grasp my love's measure? Does some little part of my soul make itself felt of you there in the darkness? Oh, what is happening to me this evening is too sweet, too deeply dear! I tell you all these

things, and you listen to me, you! Not in my least modest hoping did I ever hope so much! I have now only to die! It is because of words of mine that she is trembling among the dusky branches! For you are trembling, like a flower among leaves! Yes, you tremble, . . . for whether you will or no, I have felt the worshipped trembling of your hand all along this thrilled and blissful jasmine-bough! [He madly kisses the end of a pendent bough]

*Roxane* Yes, I tremble . . . and weep . . . and love you . . . and am yours! . . . For you have carried me away away!

*Cyrano* Then, let death come! I have moved you, I! . . . There is but one thing more I ask . . .

*Christian* [under the balcony] A kiss!

*Roxane* [drawing hastily back] What?

*Cyrano* Oh!

*Roxane* You ask? . . .

*Cyrano* Yes . . . I . . . [To CHRISTIAN] You are in too great haste!

*Christian* Since she is so moved, I must take advantage of it!

*Cyrano* [to ROXANE]. I . . . Yes, it is true I asked . . . but, merciful heavens!

I knew at once that I had been too bold

*Roxane* [a shade disappointed] You insist no more than so?

*Cyrano* Indeed, I insist . . . without insisting! Yes! yes! but your modesty shrinks! . . . I insist, but yet . . . the kiss I begged . . . refuse it me!

*Christian* [to CYRANO, pulling at his mantle] Why?

*Cyrano* Hush, Christian!

*Roxane* [bending over the balcony-rail] What are you whispering?

*Cyrano* Reproaches to myself for having gone too far, I was saying "Hush, Christian!" [The theorbos are heard playing] Your pardon! . . . a second! Someone is coming!

[ROXANE closes the window. CYRANO listens to the theorbos, one of which plays a lively and the other a lugubrious tune]

*Cyrano*. A dance? . . . A dirge? . . . What do they mean? Is it a man or a woman? . . . Ah, it is a monk!

[Enter a CAPUCHIN MONK, who



*goes from house to house, with a lantern, examining the doors]*

*Cyrano* [*to the CAPUCHIN*]. What are you looking for, Diogenes?

*The Capuchin* I am looking for the house of Madame .

*Christian* He is in the way!

*The Capuchin* Magdeleine Robin .

*Cyrano* [*pointing up one of the streets*] This way! . . . straight ahead . . . go straight ahead . . .

*The Capuchin* I thank you I will say ten Aves for your peace [*Exit*]

*Cyrano* My good wishes speed your cow! [*He comes forward toward CHRISTIAN*]

*Christian* Insist upon the kiss! . . .

*Cyrano* No, I will not!

*Christian* Sooner or later . . .

*Cyrano* It is true! It must come, the moment of inebriation when your lips shall imperiously be impelled toward each other, because the one is fledged with youthful gold and the other is so soft a pink! [*To himself*] I had rather it should be because . . .

[*Sound of the window reopening, CHRISTIAN hides under the balcony*]

*Roxane* [*stepping forward on the balcony*]. Are you there? We were speaking of . . . of . . . of a . . .

*Cyrano* Kiss The word is sweet Why does your fair lip stop at it? If the mere word burns it, what will be of the thing itself? Do not make it into a fearful matter, and then fear! Did you not a moment ago insensibly leave playfulness behind and slip without trepidation from a smile to a sigh, from a sigh to a tear? Slip but a little further in the same blessed direction from a tear to a kiss there is scarcely a dividing shiver!

*Roxane* Say no more!

*Cyrano*. A kiss! When all is said, what is a kiss? An oath of allegiance taken in closer proximity, a promise more precise, a seal on a confession, a rose-red dot upon the letter i in loving, a secret which elects the mouth for ear, an instant of eternity murmuring like a bee, balmy communion with a flavor of flowers, a fashion of inhaling each other's heart, and of tasting, on the brink of the lips, each other's soul!

*Roxane* Say no more no more!

*Cyrano*. A kiss, madame, is a thing so

noble that the Queen of France, on the most fortunate of lords, bestowed one, did the queen herself!

*Roxane* If that be so . . .

*Cyrano* [*with increasing fervor*] Like Buckingham I have suffered in long silence, like him I worship a queen, like him I am sorrowful and unchanging . . .

*Roxane*. Like him you enthrall through the eyes the heart that follows you!

*Cyrano* [*to himself, sobered*]. True, I am handsome . . . I had forgotten!

*Roxane* Come then and gather it, the supreme flower . . .

*Cyrano* [*pushing CHRISTIAN toward the balcony*]. Go!

*Roxane* . . . tasting of the heart.

*Cyrano* Go! .

*Roxane* . . . murmuring like a bee . . .

*Cyrano* Go!

*Christian* [*hesitating*]. But now I feel as if I ought not!

*Roxane* . . . making Eternity an instant .

*Cyrano* [*pushing CHRISTIAN*]. Scale the balcony, you donkey!

[*CHRISTIAN springs toward the balcony, and climbs by means of the bench, the vine, the posts and balusters*]

*Christian* Ah, Roxane! [*He clasps her to him, and bends over her lips*]

*Cyrano*. Ha! . . . What a turn of the screw to my heart! . . . Kiss, banquet of Love at which I am Lazarus, a crumb drops from your table even to me, here in the shade . . . Yes, in my outstretched heart a little falls, as I feel that upon the lip pressing her lip Roxane kisses the words spoken by me! [*The theorbos are heard*] A merry tune . . . a mournful one . . . The monk! [*He goes through the pretence of arriving on the spot at a run, as if from a distance calling*] Ho, there!

*Roxane* What is it?

*Cyrano* It is I I was passing this way. Is Christian there?

*Christian* [*astonished*]. Cyrano!

*Roxane*. Good-evening, cousin!

*Cyrano* Cousin, good-evening!

*Roxane* I will come down

[*ROXANE disappears in the house*]

[*CAPUCHIN re-enters at the back*]

*Christian* [*seeing him*]. Oh, again! [*He follows ROXANE*]

*The Capuchin* It is here she lives, I am certain  
*Magdeleine* Robin

*Cyrano* You said Ro-lin

*The Capuchin* No, bin, b, i, n, bin!

*Roxane* [appearing upon the threshold, followed by RAGUENEAU carrying a lantern, and CHRISTIAN] What is it?

*The Capuchin* A letter

*Christian* What?

*The Capuchin* [to ROXANE] Oh, the contents can be only of a sacred character! It is from a worthy nobleman who .

*Roxane* [to CHRISTIAN]. It is from De Guiche!

*Christian* He dares to . ?

*Roxane* Oh, he will not trouble me much longer! [Opening the letter] I love you, and if . [By the light of RAGUENEAU'S lantern she reads, aside, low] Mademoiselle The drums are beating My regiment is buckling on its corselet It is about to leave I am thought to have left already, but lag behind I am disobeying you I am in the convent here I am coming to you, and send you word by a friar, silly as a sheep, who has no suspicion of the import of this letter You smiled too sweetly upon me an hour ago I must see you smile again Provide to be alone, and deign graciously to receive the audacious worshipper, forgiven already, I can but hope, who signs himself your—etc . [To the CAPUCHIN] Father, this is what the letter tells me Listen [All draw nearer, she reads aloud] Mademoiselle The wishes of the cardinal may not be disregarded, however hard compliance with them prove I have therefore chosen as bearer of this letter a most reverend, holy, and sagacious Capuchin, it is our wish that he should at once, in your own dwelling pronounce the nuptial blessing over you Christian must secretly become your husband I send him to you You dislike him Bow to Heaven's will in resignation, and be sure that it will bless your zeal, and sure, likewise, mademoiselle, of the respect of him who is and will be ever your most humble and etc

*The Capuchin* [beaming] The worthy gentleman! I know it! You remember that I said so The contents of that letter can be only of a sacred character!

*Roxane* [low, to CHRISTIAN] I am a fluent reader, am I not?

*Christian* Hm!

*Roxane* [with feigned despair] Ah . it is horrible!

*The Capuchin* [who has turned the light of his lantern upon CYRANO] You are the one?

*Christian* No, I am

*The Capuchin* [turning the light upon him, and as if his good looks aroused suspicion] But

*Roxane* [quickly] Postscript You will bestow upon the convent two hundred and fifty crowns

*The Capuchin* The worthy, worthy gentleman! [To ROXANE] Be reconciled!

*Roxane* [with the expression of a martyr] I will endeavor! [While RAGUENEAU opens the door for the CAPUCHIN, whom CHRISTIAN is showing into the house, ROXANE says low to CYRANO] De Guiche is coming! Keep him here! Do not let him enter until . .

*Cyrano* I understand! [To the CAPUCHIN] How long will it take to marry them?

*The Capuchin* A quarter of an hour

*Cyrano* [pushing all toward the house]. Go in! I shall be here!

*Roxane* [to CHRISTIAN] Come!

[They go in]

*Cyrano* How can I detain De Guiche for a quarter of an hour? [He jumps upon the bench, climbs the wall toward the balcony-rail] So! . I climb up here! . I know what I will do! [The theorbos play a melancholy tune] Ho, it is a man! [The tune quavers lugubriously] Ho, ho, this time there is no mistake! [He is on the balcony, he pulls the brim of his hat over his eyes, takes off his sword, wraps his cloak about him, and bends over the balcony-rail] No, it is not too far! [He climbs over the balcony-rail, and reaching for a long bough that projects beyond the garden wall, holds on to it with both hands, ready to let himself drop] I shall make a slight commotion in the atmosphere!

*De Guiche* [enters masked, groping in the dark] What can that thrice-damned Capuchin be about?

*Cyrano* The devil! if he should recognize my voice? [Letting go with one hand he makes show of turning a key] Cric! crac! [Solemnly] Cyrano, resume the accent of Bergerac!

*De Guiche* [looking at ROXANE'S house].

Yes, that is it I can scarcely see. This mask bothers my eyes!

*[He is about to enter ROXANE'S house, CYRANO swings from the balcony, holding on to the bough, which bends and lets him down between the door and DE GUICHE. He intentionally drops very heavily, to give the effect of dropping from a great height, and lies flattened upon the ground, motionless, as if stunned.]*

*De Guiche* What is it? *[When he looks up, the bough has swung into place, he sees nothing but the sky]* Where did this man drop from?

*Cyrano* *[rising to a sitting posture]*. From the moon!

*De Guiche* From the . . . ?

*Cyrano* *[in a dreamy voice]*. What time is it?

*De Guiche* Is he mad?

*Cyrano* What time? What country? What day? What season?

*De Guiche* But . . .

*Cyrano* I am dazed!

*De Guiche* Monsieur . . .

*Cyrano* I have dropped from the moon like a bomb!

*De Guiche* *[impatiently]* What are you babbling about?

*Cyrano* *[rising, in a terrible voice]* I tell you I have dropped from the moon!

*De Guiche* *[backing a step]* Very well. You have dropped from the moon! . . . He is perhaps a lunatic!

*Cyrano* *[walking up close to him]*. Not metaphorically, mind that!

*De Guiche* But . . .

*Cyrano* A hundred years ago, or else a minute,—for I have no conception how long I have been falling,—I was up there, in that saffron-colored ball!

*De Guiche* *[shrugging his shoulders]*. You were. Now let me pass!

*Cyrano* *[standing in his way]* Where am I? Be frank with me! Keep nothing from me! In what region, among what people, have I been shot like an aerolite?

*De Guiche* I wish to pass!

*Cyrano* While falling I could not choose my way, and have no notion where I have fallen! Is it upon a moon, or is it upon an earth, I have been dragged by my posterior weight?

*De Guiche* I tell you, sir . . .

*Cyrano* *[with a scream of terror at which DE GUICHE starts backward a step]* Great God! In this country men's faces are soot-black!

*De Guiche* *[lifting his hand to his face]* What does he mean?

*Cyrano* *[still terrified]*. Am I in Algeria? Are you a native? . . .

*De Guiche* *[who has felt his mask]* Ah, my mask!

*Cyrano* *[pretending to be easier]* So I am in Venice! . . . Or am I in Genoa?

*De Guiche* *[attempting to pass]* A lady is expecting me!

*Cyrano* *[completely reassured]*. Ah, then I am in Paris.

*De Guiche* *[smiling in spite of himself]*. The rogue is not far from amusing!

*Cyrano* Ah, you are laughing!

*De Guiche* I laugh . . . but intend to pass!

*Cyrano* *[beaming]* To think I should strike Paris! *[Quite at his ease, laughing, brushing himself, bowing]* I arrived—pray, pardon my appearance!—by the last whirlwind I am rather unpresentable—Travel, you know! My eyes are still full of star-dust. My spurs are clogged with bristles off a planet. *[Appearing to pick something off his sleeve]* See, on my sleeve, a comet's hair! *[He makes a feint of blowing it away]*

*De Guiche* *[beside himself]* Sir . . .

*Cyrano* *[as DE GUICHE is about to pass, stretching out his leg as if to show something on it, thereby stopping him]* Embedded in my calf, I have brought back one of the Great Bear's teeth and as, falling too near the Trident, I strained aside to clear one of its prongs, I landed sitting in Libra, . . . yes, one of the scales! and now my weight is registered up there! *[Quickly preventing DE GUICHE from passing, and taking hold of a button on his doublet]* And if, monsieur, you should take my nose between your fingers and compress it milk would result!

*De Guiche* What are you saying? Milk?

*Cyrano* Of the Milky Way.

*De Guiche* Go to the devil!

*Cyrano* No! I am sent from Heaven, literally. *[Folding his arms]* Will you believe—I discovered it in passing—that

Sirius at night puts on a night-cap? [*Confidentially*] The lesser Bear is too little yet to bite . . . [*Laughing*] I tumbled plump through Lyra, and snapped a string! [*Magnificent*] But I intend setting all this down in a book, and the golden stars I have brought back caught in my shaggy mantle, when the book is printed, will be seen serving as asterisks!

*De Guiche* I have stood this long enough! I want . . .

*Cyrano* I know perfectly what you want!

*De Guiche* Man . . .

*Cyrano* You want to know, from me, at first hand, what the moon is made of, and whether that monumental pumpkin is inhabited?

*De Guiche* [*shouting*] Not in the very least! I want . . .

*Cyrano* To know how I got there? I got there by a method of my own invention

*De Guiche* [*discouraged*]. He is mad! . . . stark!

*Cyrano* [*disdainfully*] Do not imagine that I resorted to anything so absurd as Regiomontanus's eagle, or anything so lacking in enterprise as Archytas's pigeon!

*De Guiche* The madman is erudite

*Cyrano* I drew up nothing that had ever been thought of before! [*DE GUICHE has succeeded in getting past CYRANO, and is nearing ROXANE'S door, CYRANO follows him, ready to buttonhole him*] I invented no less than six ways of storming the blue fort of Heaven!

*De Guiche* [*turning around*] Six, did you say?

*Cyrano* [*volubly*] One way was to stand naked in the sunshine, in a harness thickly studded with glass phials, each filled with morning dew. The sun in drawing up the dew, you see, could not have helped drawing me up too!

*De Guiche* [*surprised, taking a step toward CYRANO*] True. That is one!

*Cyrano* [*taking a step backward, with a view to drawing DE GUICHE away from the door*] Or else, I could have let the wind into a cedar coffer, then rarefied the imprisoned element by means of cunningly adjusted burning-glasses, and soared up with it!

*De Guiche* [*taking another step toward CYRANO*] Two!

*Cyrano* [*backing*]. Or else, mechanic as well as artificer, I could have fashioned a giant grasshopper, with steel joints, which, impelled by successive explosions of saltpeter, would have hopped with me to the azure meadows where graze the starry flocks!

*De Guiche* [*unconsciously following CYRANO, and counting on his fingers*] That makes three!

*Cyrano* Since smoke by its nature ascends, I could have blown into an appropriate globe a sufficient quantity to ascend with me!

*De Guiche* [*as above, more and more astonished*] Four!

*Cyrano*. Since Phoebe, the moon-goddess, when she is at wane, is greedy, O beeves! of your marrow, . . . with that marrow have besmeared myself!

*De Guiche* [*amazed*] Five!

*Cyrano* [*who while talking has backed, followed by DE GUICHE, to the further side of the square, near a bench*] Or else, I could have placed myself upon an iron plate, have taken a magnet of suitable size, and thrown it in the air! That way is a very good one! The magnet flies upward, the iron instantly after, the magnet no sooner overtaken than you fling it up again . . . The rest is clear! You can go upward indefinitely

*De Guiche* Six! . . . But here are six excellent methods! Which of the six, my dear sir, did you select?

*Cyrano* A seventh!

*De Guiche* Did you, indeed? And what was that?

*Cyrano* I give you a hundred guesses!

*De Guiche*. No!

*Cyrano* [*imitating the noise of the surf, and making great mysterious gestures*] Hoo-ish! hoo-ish!

*De Guiche* Well! What is that?

*Cyrano* Cannot you guess?

*De Guiche* No!

*Cyrano* The tide! . . . At the hour in which the moon attracts the deep, I lay down upon the sands, after a sea-bath and, my head being drawn up first,—the reason of this, you see, that the hair will hold a quantity of water in its mop!—I rose in the air, straight, beautifully straight, like an angel. I rose . . . I rose . . .

softly without an effort when,  
suddenly, I felt a shock Then

*De Guiche* [lured on by curiosity, taking  
a seat on the bench] Well, . then?

*Cyrano* Then [resuming his natural  
voice] The time is up, monsieur, and I  
release you They are married

*De Guiche* [getting to his feet with a  
leap] I am dreaming or drunk! That  
voice! [The door of ROXANE's house opens,  
lackeys appear carrying lighted candelabra  
CYRANO removes his hat] And that nose!

*Cyrano*!

*Cyrano* [bowing] *Cyrano* They have  
exchanged rings within the quarter of the  
hour

*De Guiche* Who have? [He turns round  
*Tableau* Behind the lackey stand ROXANE  
and CHRISTIAN holding hands The CAP-  
UCHIN follows them smiling RAGUENEAU  
holds high a flambeau The DUENNA closes  
the procession, bewildered, in her bedgown]  
Heavens! [To ROXANE] You! [Recogniz-  
ing CHRISTIAN with amazement.] He?  
[Bowng to ROXANE] Your astuteness com-  
pels my admiration! [To CYRANO] My  
compliments to you, ingenious inventor of  
flying machines Your experiences would  
have beguiled a saint on the threshold of  
Paradise! Make a note of them .  
They can be used again, with profit, in a  
book!

*Cyrano* [bowing] I will confidently fol-  
low your advice

*The Capuchin* [to DE GUICHE, pointing  
at the lovers, and wagging his great white  
beard with satisfaction] A beautiful  
couple, my son, brought together by you!

*De Guiche* [eyeing him frigidly] As  
you say! [To ROXANE] And now proceed,  
Madame, to take leave of your husband

*Roxane* What?

*De Guiche* [to CHRISTIAN] The regi-  
ment is on the point of starting. You are  
to join it!

*Roxane* To go to war?

*De Guiche* Of course!

*Roxane* But the cadets are not going!

*De Guiche* They are! [Taking out the  
paper which he had put in his pocket]  
Here is the order [To CHRISTIAN] I beg  
you will take it to the Captain, baron,  
yourself

*Roxane* [throwing herself in CHRISTIAN's  
arms] Christian!

*De Guiche* [to CYRANO, with a malignant  
laugh] The wedding night is somewhat  
far as yet!

*Cyrano* [aside] He thinks that he is  
giving me great pain!

*Christian* [to ROXANE] Oh, once more,  
dear! Once more!

*Cyrano* Be reasonable . . Come! . .  
Enough!

*Christian* [still clasping ROXANE] Oh,  
it is hard to leave her . You cannot  
know . .

*Cyrano* [trying to draw him away] I  
know.

[Drums are heard in the distance  
sounding a march]

*De Guiche* [at the back] The regiment  
is on its way!

*Roxane* [to CYRANO, while she clings to  
CHRISTIAN whom he is trying to draw  
away]. Oh! I entrust him to your  
care! Promise that under no circumstance  
shall his life be placed in danger!

*Cyrano* I will endeavor . but ob-  
viously cannot promise

*Roxane* [same business] Promise that  
he will be careful of himself!

*Cyrano* I will do my best, but .

*Roxane* [as above] That during this  
terrible siege he shall not take harm from  
the cold!

*Cyrano* I will try, but

*Roxane* [as above] That he will be true  
to me!

*Cyrano* Of course, but yet, you see

*Roxane* [as above] That he will write  
to me often!

*Cyrano* [stopping] Ah, that . . I prom-  
ise freely!

## ACT FOUR

### THE GASCONY CADETS

The post occupied at the siege of Arras  
by the company of CARBON DE CASTEL-  
JALOUX At the back, across the whole  
stage, sloping earthwork Beyond this is  
seen a plain stretching to the horizon, the  
country is covered with constructions relat-  
ing to the siege In the distance, against  
the sky, the outlines of the walls and roofs  
of Arras Tents, scattered arms, drums,  
etc It is shortly before sunrise The East  
is yellow Sentinels at even intervals.

*Camp-fires The GASCONY CADETS lie asleep, rolled in their cloaks CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX and LE BRET are watching All are very pale and gaunt CHRISTIAN lies sleeping among the others, in his military cape, in the foreground, his face lighted by one of the camp-fires Silence*

*Le Bret* It is dreadful!

*Carbon* Yes Nothing left.

*Le Bret* Mordous!

*Carbon* [warning him by a gesture to speak lower] Curse in a whisper! You will wake them! [To the CADETS] Hush! Go to sleep! [To LE BRET] Who sleeps dines

*Le Bret* Who lies awake misses two good things What a situation!

[A few shots are heard in the distance]

*Carbon* The devil take their popping! They will wake my young ones! [To the CADETS who lift their heads] Go to sleep!

[The CADETS lie down again. Other shots are heard, nearer]

*One of the Cadets* [stirring] The devil! Again?

*Carbon* It is nothing It is Cyrano getting home

[The heads which had started up, go down again]

*A Sentinel* [outside] Ventrebleu! Who goes there?

*Cyrano's Voice* Bergerac!

*The Sentinel* [upon the embankment] Ventrebleu! Who goes there?

*Cyrano* [appearing at the top of the embankment] Bergerac, blockhead! [He comes down LE BRET goes to him, uneasy]

*Le Bret* Ah, thank God!

*Cyrano* [warning him by a sign to wake no one] Hush!

*Le Bret* Wounded?

*Cyrano* Do you not know that it has become a habit with them to miss me?

*Le Bret* To me, it seems a little excessive that you should, every morning, for the sake of taking a letter, risk

*Cyrano* [stopping in front of CHRISTIAN] I promised that he would write often [He looks at CHRISTIAN] He sleeps He has grown pale If the poor little girl could know that he is starving . . . But handsome as ever!

*Le Bret* Go at once and sleep

*Cyrano* Le Bret, do not grumble! Learn this I nightly cross the Spanish lines at a point where I know beforehand everyone will be drunk

*Le Bret* You ought some time to bring us back some victuals!

*Cyrano* I must be lightly burdened to fit through! But I know that there will be events before the evening The French, unless I am much mistaken, will eat or die

*Le Bret* Oh, tell us!

*Cyrano* No, I am not certain . . . You will see!

*Carbon* What a shameful reversal of the order of things, that the besieger should be starved!

*Le Bret* Alas! never was more complicated siege than this of Arras We besiege Arras, and, caught in a trap, are ourselves besieged by the Cardinal-prince of Spain

*Cyrano* Someone now ought to come and besiege him

*Le Bret* I am not joking!

*Cyrano* Oh, oh!

*Le Bret* To think, ungrateful boy, that every day you risk a life precious as yours, solely to carry . . . [CYRANO goes toward one of the tents] Where are you going?

*Cyrano* I am going to write another

[He lifts the canvas flap, and disappears in the tent Daybreak has brightened Rosy flush The city of Arras at the horizon catches a golden light The report of a cannon is heard, followed at once by a drum-call, very far away, at the left Other drums beat, nearer The drum-calls answer one another, come nearer, come very near, and go off, decreasing, dying in the distance, toward the right, having made the circuit of the camp Noise of general awakening Voices of officers in the distance]

*Carbon* [with a sigh] The réveillé Ah, me! [The CADETS stir in their cloaks, stretch] An end to the succulent slumbers! I know but too well what their first word will be!

*One of the Cadets* [sitting up] I am famished!

*Other Cadet* I believe I am dying!

*All* Oh!

*Carbon* Get up!

*Third Cadet* I cannot go a step!

*Fourth Cadet.* I have not strength to stir!

*First Cadet* [*looking at himself in a bit of armor*] My tongue is coated it must be the weather that is indigestible!

*Other Cadet* Anyone who wants them, can have all my titles of nobility for a Chester cheese or part of one!

*Other Cadet* If my stomach does not have something put into it to take up the attention of my gastric juice, I shall retire into my tent before long . . . like Achilles!

*Other Cadet* Yes, they ought to provide us with bread!

*Carbon* [*going to the tent into which CYRANO has retired; low*] Cyrano!

*Other Cadets* We cannot stand this much longer!

*Carbon* [*as above, at the door of the tent*] To the rescue, Cyrano! You who succeed so well always in cheering them, come and make them pluck up spirits!

*Second Cadet* [*falling upon FIRST CADET who is chewing something*]. What are you chewing, man?

*First Cadet* A bit of gun-tow fried in axle-grease using a burganet as frying pan. The suburbs of Arras are not precisely rich in game .

*Other Cadet* [*entering*]. I have been hunting!

*Other Cadet* [*the same*]. I have been fishing!

*All* [*rising and falling upon the newcomers*] What?—what did you catch?—A pheasant?—A carp?—Quick! quick! . . . Let us see!

*The Huntsman* A sparrow!

*The Angler* A gudgeon!

*All* [*exasperated*] Enough of this! Let us revolt!

*Carbon* To the rescue, Cyrano!

[*It is now broad daylight*]

*Cyrano* [*coming out of the tent, tranquil, a pen behind his ear, a book in his hand*] What is the matter? [*Silence To FIRST CADET*] Why do you go off like that, with that slouching gait?

*The Cadet* I have something away down in my heels which inconveniences me.

*Cyrano* And what is that?

*The Cadet* My stomach

*Cyrano* That is where mine is, too

*The Cadet* Then you too must be inconvenienced

*Cyrano* No The size of the hollow within me merely increases my sense of my size

*Second Cadet.* I happen to have teeth, long ones!

*Cyrano* The better will you bite . . . in good time!

*Third Cadet* I reverberate like a drum!

*Cyrano* You will be of use . . . to sound the charge!

*Other Cadet* I have a buzzing in my ears!

*Cyrano.* A mistake Empty belly, no ears You hear no buzzing

*Other Cadet* Ah, a trifling article to eat and a little oil upon it!

*Cyrano* [*taking off the CADET'S morion and placing it in his hand*] That is seasoned

*Other Cadet* What is there we could devour?

*Cyrano* [*tossing him the book he has been holding*] Try the *Iliad*!

*Other Cadet* The minister, in Paris, makes his four meals a day!

*Cyrano* You feel it remiss in him not to send you a bit of partridge?

*The same* Why should he not? And some wine!

*Cyrano* Richelieu, some Burgundy, if you please?

*The same.* He might, by one of his Capuchins!

*Cyrano* By his Eminence, perhaps, in sober gray?

*Other Cadet.* No ogre was ever so hungry!

*Cyrano* You may have your fill yet of humble-pie!

*First Cadet* [*shrugging his shoulders*] Forever jests! . . . puns! . . . mots!

*Cyrano* *Le mot* forever, indeed! And I would wish to die, on a fine evening, under a rose-flushed sky, delivering myself of a good *mot* in a good cause! . . . Ah, yes, the best were indeed, far from fevered and potion, pierced with the only noble weapon, by an adversary worthy of oneself, to fall upon a glorious field, the point of a sword through his heart, the point of a jest on his lips! . . .



*All [in a wail]* I am hungry!

*Cyrano [folding his arms]* God ha' mercy! can you think of nothing but eating? Come here, Bertrandou the fifer, once the shepherd! Take from the double case one of your fifes breathe into it, play to this pack of guzzlers and of gluttons our homely melodies, of haunting rhythm, every note of which appeals like a little sister, through whose every strain are heard strains of beloved voices mild melodies whose slowness brings to mind the slowness of the smoke upcurling from our native hamlet hearths. melodies that seem to speak to a man in his native dialect!

*[The old fifer sits down and makes ready his fife]* To-day let the fife, martial unwillingly, be reminded, while your fingers upon its slender stem flutter like birds in a delicate minuet, that before being ebony it was reed, surprise itself by what you make it sing, let it feel restored to it the soul of its youth, rustic and peaceable! *[The old man begins playing Languedoc tunes]* Listen, Gascons! It is no more, beneath his fingers, the shrill fife of the camp, but the soft flute of the woodland! It is no more, between his lips, the whistling note of battle, but the lowly lay of goatherds leading their flocks to feed! Hark!

It sings of the valley, the heath, the forest! . . . of the little shepherd, sun-burned under his crimson cap! the green delight of evening on the river! Hark Gascons all! It sings of Gascony!

*[Every head has drooped, all eyes have grown dreamy, tears are furtively brushed away with a sleeve, the hem of a cloak]*

*Carbon [to CYRANO, low]* You are making them weep!

*Cyrano* With homesickness! a nobler pain than hunger not physical mental! I am glad the seat of their suffering should have removed that the gripe should now afflict their hearts!

*Carbon* But you weaken them, making them weep!

*Cyrano [beckoning to a drummer]* Never fear! The hero in their veins is quickly roused It is enough to *[He signs to the drummer, who begins drumming]*

*All [starting to their feet and snatching up their arms].* Heu? What? What is it?

*Cyrano [smiling]* You see? The sound of the drum was enough! Farewell dreams, regrets, old homestead, love What comes with the fife with the drum may go

*One of the Cadets [looking off at the back.]* Ah! ah! Here comes Monsieur de Guiche!

*All the Cadets [grumbling]* Hoo . . .

*Cyrano [smiling]* Flattering murmur . . .

*One of the Cadets* He bores us!

*Other Cadet* Showing himself off, with his broad point collar on top of his armor!

*Other Cadet* As if lace were worn with steel!

*First Cadet* Convenient, if you have a boil on your neck to cover . . .

*Second Cadet* There is another courtier for you!

*Other Cadet* His uncle's own nephew!

*Carbon* He is a Gascon, nevertheless!

*First Cadet* Not genuine! Never trust him For a Gascon, look you, must be something of a madman nothing is so deadly to deal with as a Gascon who is completely rational!

*Le Bret* He is pale!

*Other Cadet* He is hungry, as hungry as any poor devil of us! But his corselet being freely embellished with gilt studs, his stomach-ache is radiant in the sun!

*Cyrano [eagerly]* Let us not appear to suffer, either! You, your card, your pipes, your dice *[All briskly set themselves to playing with cards and dice, on the heads of drums, on stools, on cloaks spread over the ground They light long tobacco pipes]* And I will be reading Descartes . . .

*[He walks to and fro, forward and backward, reading a small book which he has taken from his pocket Tableau]*

*[Enter DE GUICHE Everyone appears absorbed and satisfied DE GUICHE is very pale He goes toward CARBON]*

*De Guiche [to CARBON]* Ah, good-morning *[They look at each other attentively Aside, with satisfaction]* He is pale as plaster

*Carbon [same business]* His eyes are all that is left of him

*De Guiche [looking at the CADETS]* So here are the wrongheaded rascals?



Yes, gentlemen, it is reported to me on every side that I am your scoff and derision, that the cadets, highland nobility, Béarn clodhoppers, Périgord baronets cannot express sufficient contempt for their colonel, call me intriguer, courtier, find it irksome to their taste that I should wear, with my cunass, a collar of Genoese point, and never cease to air their wondering indignation that a man should be a Gascon without being a vagabond! [*Silence The CADETS continue smoking and playing*] Shall I have you punished by your captain? . . . I do not like to

Carbon Did you otherwise, however, I am free, and punish only . . .

De Guiche Ah? .

Carbon My company is paid by myself, belongs to me I obey no orders but such as relate to war

De Guiche Ah, is it so? Enough, then I will treat your taunts with simple scorn My fashion of deporting myself under fire is well known You are not unaware of the manner in which yesterday, at Bapaume, I forced back the columns of the Comte de Bucquoi, gathering my men together to plunge forward like an avalanche, three times I charged him

Cyrano [*without lifting his nose from his book*] And your white scarf?

De Guiche [*surprised and self-satisfied*] You heard of that circumstance? In fact, it happened that as I was wheeling about to collect my men for the third charge, I was caught in a stream of fugitives which bore me onward to the edge of the enemy I was in danger of being captured and cut off with an arquebuse, when I had the presence of mind to untie and let slip to the ground the white scarf which proclaimed my military grade Thus was I enabled, undistinguished, to withdraw from among the Spaniards, and thereupon returning with my reinspired men, to defeat them Well? . . . What do you say to the incident?

[*The CADETS have appeared not to be listening, at this point, however, hands with cards and dice-boxes remain suspended in the air, no pipe-smoke is ejected, all expresses expectation*]

Cyrano That never would Henry the Fourth, however great the number of his

opponents, have consented to diminish his presence by the size of his white plume

[*Silent joy Cards fall, dice rattle, smoke upwreathes*]

De Guiche The trick was successful, however!

[*As before, expectation suspends gambling and smoking*]

Cyrano Very likely But one should not resign the honor of being a target [*Cards, dice, smoke, fall, rattle, and upwreathes, as before, in expression of increasing glee*] Had I been at hand when you allowed your scarf to drop—the quality of our courage, monsieur, shows different in this,—I would have picked it up and worn it .

De Guiche Ah, yes,—more of your Gascon bragging!

Cyrano Bragging? . . . Lend me the scarf I engage to mount, ahead of all, to the assault, wearing it crosswise upon my breast!

De Guiche A Gascon's offer, that too! You know that the scarf was left in the enemy's camp, by the banks of the Scarpe, where bullets since then have hailed . . . whence no one can bring it back!

Cyrano [*taking a white scarf from his pocket and handing it to DE GUICHE*] Here it is.

[*Silence The CADETS smother their laughter behind cards and in dice-boxes DE GUICHE turns around, looks at them, instantly they become grave, one of them, with an air of unconcern, whistles the tune played earlier by the fifer*]

De Guiche [*taking the scarf*] I thank you I shall be able with this shred of white to make a signal which I was hesitating to make . . . [*He goes to the top of the bank and waves the scarf*]

All What now? What is this?

The Sentinel [*at the top of the bank*] A man . . . over there . . . running off .

De Guiche [*coming forward again*] It is a supposed Spanish spy He is very useful to us The information he carries to the enemy is that which I give him,—so that their decisions are influenced by us

Cyrano He is a scoundrel!

De Guiche [*coolly tying on his scarf*] He is a convenience We were saying? . . . Ah, I was about to tell you Last

night, having resolved upon a desperate stroke to obtain supplies, the Marshal secretly set out for Dourlens. The royal sutlers are encamped there. He expects to join them by way of the tilled fields, but, to provide against interference, he took with him troops in such number that, certainly, if we were now attacked, the enemy would find easy work. Half of the army is absent from the camp.

*Carbon* If the Spaniards knew that, it might be serious. But they do not know.

*De Guiche* They do. And are going to attack us.

*Carbon* Ah!

*De Guiche* My pretended spy came to warn me of their intention. He said, moreover, I can direct the attack. At what point shall it be? I will lead them to suppose it the least strong, and they will centre their efforts against it. I answered, Very well. Go from the camp. Look down the line. Let them attack at the point I signal from.

*Carbon* [to the CADETS] Gentlemen, get ready!

[All get up. Noise of swords and belts being buckled on.]

*De Guiche* They will be here in an hour.

*First Cadet* Oh! . . . if there is a whole hour!

[All sit down again, and go on with their games.]

*De Guiche* [to CARBON] The main object is to gain time. The Marshal is on his way back.

*Carbon* And to gain time?

*De Guiche* You will be so obliging as to keep them busy killing you.

*Cyrano* Ah, this is your revenge!

*De Guiche* I will not pretend that if I had been fond of you, I would have thus singled out you and yours, but, as your bravery is unquestionably beyond that of others, I am serving my King at the same time as my inclination.

*Cyrano* Suffer me, monsieur, to express my gratitude.

*De Guiche* I know that you affect fighting one against a hundred. You will not complain of lacking opportunity. [He goes toward the back with CARBON.]

*Cyrano* [to the CADETS] We shall now be able, gentlemen, to add to the Gascon escutcheon, which bears, as it is, six chev-

rons, or and azure, the chevron that was wanting to complete it,—blood-red!

[DE GUICHE at the back speaks low with CARBON. Orders are given. All is made ready to repel an attack. CYRANO goes toward CHRISTIAN, who stands motionless, with folded arms.]

*Cyrano* [laying his hand on CHRISTIAN'S shoulder] Christian?

*Christian* [shaking his head] Roxane!

*Cyrano* Ah me!

*Christian* I wish I might at least put my whole heart's last blessing in a beautiful letter!

*Cyrano* I mistrusted that it would come to-day. [He takes a letter from his doublet] and I have written your farewells.

*Christian* Let me see!

*Cyrano* You wish to see it? . . .

*Christian* [taking the letter] Yes! [He opens the letter, begins to read, stops short.] Ah?

*Cyrano* What?

*Christian* That little round blister?

*Cyrano* [hurriedly taking back the letter, and looking at it with an artless air]. A blister?

*Christian* It is a tear!

*Cyrano* It looks like one, does it not?

A poet, you see, is sometimes caught in his own snare,—that is what constitutes the interest, the charm! This letter, you must know, is very touching. In writing it I apparently made myself shed tears.

*Christian* Shed tears?

*Cyrano* Yes, because well, to die is not terrible at all . . . but never to see her again, never! that, you know, is horrible beyond all thinking. And, things having taken the turn they have, I shall not see her. [CHRISTIAN looks at him] we shall not see her. [hastily] you will not see her.

*Christian* [snatching the letter from him] Give me the letter! [Noise in the distance.]

*Voice of a Sentinel* Ventrebleu, who goes there?

[Shots. Noise of voices, tinkling of bells.]

*Carbon* What is it?

*The Sentinel* [on the top of the bank] A coach! [All run to see.]

[Noisy exclamations.] What?—In the camp?—It is driving into the camp!—It

comes from the direction of the enemy! The devil! Fire upon it!—No! the coachman is shouting something!—What does he say?—He shouts Service of the King!

*De Guiche* What? Service of the King?

*[All come down from the bank and fall into order]*

*Carbon* Hats off, all!

*De Guiche* *[at the corner]* Service of the King! Stand back, low rabble, and give it room to turn around with a handsome sweep!

*[The coach comes in at a trot It is covered with mud and dust The curtains are drawn Two lackeys behind It comes to a standstill]*

*Carbon* *[shouting]* Salute!

*[Drums roll. All the CADETS uncover]*

*De Guiche* Let down the steps!

*[Two men hurry forward The coach door opens]*

*Roxane* *[stepping from the carriage]* Good-morning!

*[At the sound of a feminine voice, all the men, in the act of bowing low, straighten themselves Con- sternation]*

*De Guiche* Service of the King! You?

*Roxane* Of the only King! . . . of Love!

*Cyrano* Ah, great God!

*Christian* *[rushing to her]*. You! Why are you here?

*Roxane* This siege lasted too long!

*Christian* Why have you come?

*Roxane* I will tell you!

*Cyrano* *[who at the sound of her voice has started, then stood motionless without venturing to look her way]* God! . . . can I trust myself to look at her?

*De Guiche* You cannot remain here

*Roxane* But I can,—I can, indeed! Will you favor me with a drum? *[She seats herself upon a drum brought forward for her]* There! I thank you! *[She laughs]* They fired upon my carriage *[Proudly]* A patrol!—It does look rather as if it were made out of a pumpkin, does it not? like Cinderella's coach! and the footmen made out of rats! *[Blowing a kiss to CHRISTIAN]* How do you do? *[Looking at them all]* You do not look overjoyed! . . . Arras is a long way from Paris, do you know

it? *[Catching sight of CYRANO]* Cousin, delighted!

*Cyrano* *[coming toward her]*. But how did you . . . ?

*Roxane* How did I find the army? Dear me, cousin, that was simple I followed straight along the line of devastation Ah, I should never have believed in such horrors had I not seen them! Gentlemen, if that is the service of your King, I like mine better!

*Cyrano*. But this is mad! . . . By what way did you come?

*Roxane* Way? . . . I drove through the Spaniards' camp

*First Cadet* Ah, what will keep lovely woman from her way!

*De Guiche* But how did you contrive to get through their lines?

*Le Bret* That must have been difficult . . .

*Roxane* No, not very. I simply drove through them, in my coach, at a trot If a hidalgo, with arrogant front, showed likely to stop us, I put my face at the window, wearing my sweetest smile, and, those gentlemen being,—let the French not grudge my saying so!—the most gallant in the world, . . . I passed!

*Carbon* Such a smile is a passport, certainly! . . . But you must have been not unfrequently bidden to stand and deliver where you were going?

*Roxane* Not unfrequently, you are right Whereupon I would say, "I am going to see my lover!" At once, the fiercest looking Spaniard of them all would gravely close my carriage door, and, with a gesture the King might emulate, motion aside the musket-barrels levelled at me, and, superb at once for grace and haughtiness, bringing his spurs together, and lifting his plumed hat, bow low and say, "Pass, señorita, pass!"

*Christian* But, Roxane . . .

*Roxane* I said, "My lover!" yes, forgive me!—You see, if I had said, "My husband!" they would never have let me by!

*Christian* But . . .

*Roxane* What troubles you?

*De Guiche* You must leave at once.

*Roxane* I?

*Cyrano* At once!

*Le Bret* As fast as you can.

*Christian* Yes, you must.

*Roxane* But why?

*Christian* [embarrassed] Because .

*Cyrano* [embarrassed too]. In three-quarters of an hour

*De Guiche* [the same]. Or an hour .

*Carbon* [the same] You had much better

*Le Bret* [the same] You might

*Roxane*. I shall remain You are going to fight

All Oh, no! . . . No!

*Roxane* He is my husband! [*She throws herself in CHRISTIAN'S arms*] Let me be killed with you!

*Christian* How your eyes shine!

*Roxane* I will tell you why they shine!

*De Guiche* [desperately] It is a post of horrible probabilities!

*Roxane* [turning toward him]. What—of horrible? . . .

*Cyrano* In proof of which he appointed us to it! . . .

*Roxane* Ah, you wish me made a widow?

*De Guiche* I swear to you . . .

*Roxane* No! Now I have lost all regard . . . Now I will surely not go . . . Besides, I think it fun!

*Cyrano* What? The précieuse contained a heroine?

*Roxane* Monsieur de Bergerac, I am a cousin of yours!

*One of the Cadets* Never think but that we will take good care of you!

*Roxane* [more and more excited] I am sure you will, my friends!

*Other Cadet* The whole camp smells of iris!

*Roxane* By good fortune I put on a hat that will look well in battle! [*Glancing toward DE GUICHE*] But perhaps it is time the Count should go —The battle might begin

*De Guiche* Ah, it is intolerable! —I am going to inspect my guns, and coming back —You still have time think better of it!

*Roxane* Never! [*Exit DE GUICHE*]

*Christian* [imploring] Roxane!

*Roxane* No!

*First Cadet* She is going to stay!

All [hurrying about, pushing one another, snatching things from one another]

A comb! —Soap! —My jacket is torn, a needle! —A ribbon! —Lend me your pocket-mirror —My cuffs! —Curling-irons! —A razor!

*Roxane* [to CYRANO, who is still pleading with her] No! Nothing shall prevail upon me to stir from this spot!

*Carbon* [after having, like the others, tightened his belt, dusted himself, brushed his hat, straightened his feather, pulled down his cuffs, approaches ROXANE, and ceremoniously] It is, perhaps, proper, since you are going to stay, that I should present to you a few of the gentlemen about to have the honor of dying in your presence

[ROXANE bows, and stands waiting, with her arm through CHRISTIAN'S] Baron Peyrescous de Colignac!

*The Cadet* [bowing] Madame!

*Carbon* [continuing to present the CADETS] Baron de Casterac de Cahuzac, —Vidame de Malgouyre Estressac Lesbas d'Escarabiot, —Chevalier d'Antignac-Juzet, —Baron Hillot de Blagnac-Saléchan de Castel Crabioules .

*Roxane* But how many names have you apiece?

*Baron Hillot* Innumerable!

*Carbon* [to ROXANE] Open your hand with the handkerchief!

*Roxane* [opens her hand, the handkerchief drops] Why?

[The whole company starts forward to pick it up]

*Carbon* [instantly catching it] My company had no flag! Now, my word, it will have the prettiest one in the army!

*Roxane* [smiling] It is rather small

*Carbon* [fastening the handkerchief on the staff of his captain's spear] But it is lace!

*One of the Cadets* [to the others] I could die without a murmur, having looked upon that beautiful face, if I had so much as a walnut inside me!

*Carbon* [who has overheard, indignant] Shame! to talk of food when an exquisite woman .

*Roxane* But the air of the camp is searching, and I myself am hungry Patties, jellied meat, light wine . are what I should like best! Will you kindly bring me some?

[Consternation]

*One of the Cadets* Bring you some?

*Other Cadet* And where, great God, shall we get them?

*Roxane* [quietly] In my coach.

All What?

*Roxane* But there is much to be done,

carving and boning and serving Look more closely at my coachman, gentlemen, and you will recognize a precious individual the sauces, if we wish, can be warmed over

*The Cadets* [springing toward the coach] It is Ragueneau! [Cheers] Oh! Oh!

*Roxane* [watching them] Poor fellows!

*Cyrano* [kissing her hand] Kind fairy!

*Ragueneau* [standing upon the box-seat like a vender at a public fair] Gentlemen! [Enthusiasm]

*The Cadets* Bravo! Bravo!

*Ragueneau* How should the Spaniards, when so much beauty passed, suspect the repast? [Applause]

*Cyrano* [low to CHRISTIAN] Hm! Hm! Christian!

*Ragueneau* Absorbed in gallantry, no heed took they [he takes a dish from the box-seat] . of galantine!

[Applause The galantine is passed from hand to hand]

*Cyrano* [low to CHRISTIAN] A word with you . . .

*Ragueneau* Venus kept their eyes fixed upon herself, while Diana slipped past with the . . . [he brandishes a joint] game!

[Enthusiasm The joint is seized by twenty hands at once]

*Cyrano* [low to CHRISTIAN] I must speak with you

*Roxane* [to the CADETS who come forward, their arms full of provisions] Spread it all upon the ground!

[Assisted by the two imperturbable footmen who were on the back of the coach, she arranges everything on the grass]

*Roxane* [To CHRISTIAN, whom CYRANO is trying to draw aside] Make yourself useful, sir!

[CHRISTIAN comes and helps her CYRANO gives evidence of uneasiness]

*Ragueneau* A truffled peacock!

*First Cadet* [radiant, comes forward cutting off a large slice of ham] Praise the pigs, we shall not go to our last fight with nothing in our b [correcting himself at sight of ROXANE] hm stomachs!

*Ragueneau* [flinging the carriage cushions] The cushions are stuffed with snipe!

[Tumult The cushions are ripped open. Laughter. Joy.]

*Ragueneau* [flinging bottles of red wine] Molten ruby! [Bottles of white wine] Fluid topaz!

*Roxane* [throwing a folded tablecloth to CYRANO] Unfold the cloth Hey! . . . be nimble!

*Ragueneau* [waving one of the coach lanterns] Each lantern is a little larder!

*Cyrano* [low to CHRISTIAN, while together they spread the cloth] I must speak with you before you speak with her .

*Ragueneau* The handle of my whip, behold, is a sausage!

*Roxane* [pouring wine, dispensing it] Since we are the ones to be killed, morbleu, we will not fret ourselves about the rest of the army! Everything for the Gascons!

And if De Guiche comes, nobody must invite him! [Going from one to the other] Gently! You have time . You must not eat so fast! There, drink. What are you crying about?

*First Cadet* It is too good!

*Roxane* Hush! White wine or red?—Bread for Monsieur de Carbon!—A knife!—Pass your plate!—You prefer crust?—A little more?—Let me help you—Champagne?—A wing?—

*Cyrano* [following ROXANE, his hands full of dishes, helping her] I adore her!

*Roxane* [going to CHRISTIAN] What will you take?

*Christian* Nothing!

*Roxane* Oh, but you must take something! This biscuit—in a little Muscatel—just a little?

*Christian* [trying to keep her from going] Tell me what made you come?

*Roxane* I owe myself to those poor fellows . Be patient, . By and by .

*Le Bret* [who had gone toward the back to pass a loaf of bread on the end of a pike to the SENTINEL upon the earthwork] De Guiche!

*Cyrano* Presto! Vanish basket, flagon, platter and pan! Hurry! Let us look as if nothing were! [To RAGUENEAU] Take a flying leap on to your box!—Is everything hidden?

[In a wink, all the eatables have been pushed into the tents, or hidden under clothes, cloaks, hats]

[Enter DE GUICHE, hurriedly, he

stops short, snuffing the air  
Silence]

De Guiche What a good smell!

One of the Cadets [*singing, with effect of mental abstraction*] To lo lo lo

De Guiche [*stopping and looking at him closely*] What is the matter with you—you, there? You are red as a crab

The Cadet I? Nothing . . . It is just my blood . . . We are going to fight . . . it tells . . .

Other Cadet Poom . . . poom . . . poom . . .

De Guiche [*turning*] What is this?

The Cadet [*slightly intoxicated*] Nothing . . . A song . . . just a little song

De Guiche You look in good spirits, my boy!

The Cadet Danger affects me that way!

De Guiche [*calling CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX to give an order*] Captain, I . . . [*He stops at sight of his face*] Peste! You look in good spirits, too

Carbon [*flushed, holding a bottle behind him, with an evasive gesture*] Oh!

De Guiche I had a cannon left over, which I have ordered them to place [*he points in the wing*] there, in that corner, and which your men can use, if necessary

One of the Cadets [*swaying from one foot to the other*] Charming attention!

Other Cadet [*smiling sugarily*] Our thanks for your gracious thoughtfulness!

De Guiche Have they gone mad? . . . [*Drily*] As you are not accustomed to handling a cannon, look out for its kicking

First Cadet Ah, pfft!

De Guiche [*going toward him, furious*] But

The Cadet A cannon knows better than to kick a Gascon!

De Guiche [*seizing him by the arm and shaking him*] You are all tipsy on what?

The Cadet [*magnificently*] The smell of powder!

De Guiche [*shrugs his shoulders, pushes aside the CADET, and goes rapidly toward ROXANE*] Quick, Madame! what have you condescended to decide?

Roxane I remain

De Guiche Retire, I beseech you!

Roxane No

De Guiche. If you are determined, then

Let me have a musket!

Carbon What do you mean?

De Guiche I, too, will remain

Cyrano At last, monsieur, an instance of pure and simple bravery!

First Cadet Might you be a Gascon, lace collar notwithstanding?

De Guiche I do not leave a woman in danger

Second Cadet [*to FIRST CADET*] Look here! I think he might be given something to eat!

[*All the food reappears, as if by magic*]

De Guiche [*his eyes brightening*]. Provisions?

Third Cadet Under every waistcoat!

De Guiche [*mastering himself, haughtily*] Do you imagine that I will eat your leavings?

Cyrano [*bowing*] You are improving!

De Guiche [*proudly, falling at the last of the sentence into a slightly GASCON accent*] I will fight before I eat!

First Cadet [*exultant*] Fight! Eat! . . . He spoke with an accent!

De Guiche [*laughing*] I did?

The Cadet He is one of us!

[*All fall to dancing*]

Carbon [*who a moment before disappeared behind the earthworks, reappearing at the top*] I have placed my pikemen. They are a determined troop

[*He points at a line of pikes projecting above the bank*]

De Guiche [*to ROXANE, bowing*] Will you accept my hand and pass them in review?

[*She takes his hand, they go toward the bank. Everyone uncovers and follows*]

Christian [*going to CYRANO, quickly*] Speak! Be quick!

[*As ROXANE appears at the top of the bank, the pikes disappear, lowered in a salute, and a cheer goes up, ROXANE bows*]

Pikemen [*outside*] Vivat!

Christian What did you want to tell me?

Cyrano In case Roxane . . .

Christian Well?

Cyrano Should speak to you of the letters . . .

Christian Yes, the letters I know!

Cyrano Do not commit the blunder of appearing surprised . . .

Christian At what?

*Cyrano* I must tell you! . . . It is quite simple, and merely comes into my mind to-day because I see her. You have . . .

*Christian* Hurry!

*Cyrano* You . . . you have written to her oftener than you suppose . . .

*Christian* Oh, have I?

*Cyrano* Yes. It was my business, you see. I had undertaken to interpret your passion, and sometimes I wrote without having told you I should write.

*Christian* Ah?

*Cyrano* It is very simple.

*Christian* But how did you succeed since we have been so closely surrounded, in . . . ?

*Cyrano* Oh, before daybreak I could cross the lines.

*Christian* [*folding his arms*] Ah, that is very simple, too? And how many times a week have I been writing? Twice? Three times? Four? . . .

*Cyrano* More.

*Christian* Every day?

*Cyrano* Yes, every day . . . twice.

*Christian* [*violently*] And you cared so much about it that you were willing to brave death . . .

*Cyrano* [*seeing ROXANE, who returns*] Be still. Not before her!

[*He goes quickly into his tent*

CADETS come and go at the back

CARBON and DE GUICHE give orders]

*Roxane* [*running to CHRISTIAN*]. And now, Christian.

*Christian* [*taking her hands*] And now, you shall tell me why, over these fearful roads, through these ranks of rough soldiery, you risked your dear self to join me?

*Roxane* Because of the letters!

*Christian* The . . . ? What did you say?

*Roxane* It is through your fault that I have been exposed to such and so many dangers. It is your letters that have gone to my head! Ah, think how many you have written me in a month, each one more beautiful . . .

*Christian* What? Because of a few little love letters.

*Roxane* Say nothing! You cannot understand! Listen. The truth is that I took to idolizing you one evening, when below my window, in a voice I did not know before, your soul began to reveal itself. Think then what the effect should be of

your letters, which have been like your voice heard constantly for one month, your voice of that evening, so tender, caressing . . . You must bear it as you can, I have come to you! Prudent Penelope would not have stayed at home with her eternal tapestry, if Ulysses, her lord, had written as you write . . . but, impulsive as Helen, have tossed aside her yarns, and flown to join him!

*Christian* But . . .

*Roxane* I read them, I re-read them, in reading I grew faint. I became your own indeed! Each fluttering leaf was like a petal of your soul wafted to me. In every word of those letters, love is felt as a flame would be felt,—love, compelling, sincere, profound.

*Christian* Ah, sincere, profound? . . . You say that it can be felt, Roxane?

*Roxane* He asks me!

*Christian* And so you came? . . .

*Roxane* I came—oh, Christian, my own, my master! If I were to kneel at your feet you would lift me, I know. It is my soul therefore which kneels, and never can you lift it from that posture!—I came to implore your pardon—as it is fitting, for we are both perhaps about to die!—your pardon for having done you the wrong, at first, in my shallowness, of loving you . . . for mere looking!

*Christian* [*in alarm*] Ah, Roxane! . . .

*Roxane* Later, dear one, grown less shallow—similar to a bird which flutters before it can fly,—your gallant exterior appealing to me still, but your soul appealing equally, I loved you for both! . . .

*Christian* And now?

*Roxane* Now at last yourself are vanquished by yourself. I love you for your soul alone . . .

*Christian* [*drawing away*]. Ah, Roxane!

*Roxane* Rejoice! For to be loved for that wherewith we are clothed so fleetingly must put a noble heart to torture . . . Your dear thought at last casts your dear face in shadow the harmonious lineaments whereby at first you pleased me, I do not see them, now my eyes are open!

*Christian* Oh!

*Roxane* You question your own triumph?

*Christian* [*sorrowfully*] Roxane!



Rozane I understand, you cannot conceive of such a love in me?

Christian I do not wish to be loved like that! I wish to be loved quite simply .

Rozane For that which other women till now have loved in you? Ah, let yourself be loved in a better way.

Christian No . I was happier before!

Rozane Ah, you do not understand! It is now that I love you most, that I truly love you It is that which makes you, you —can you not grasp it?—that I worship

And did you no longer walk our earth like a young martial Apollo . . .

Christian Say no more!

Rozane Still would I love you! Yes, though a blight should have fallen upon your face and form . . .

Christian Do not say it!

Rozane But I do say it, . . I do!

Christian What? If I were ugly, distinctly, offensively?

Rozane If you were ugly, dear, I swear it!

Christian God!

Rozane And you are glad, profoundly glad?

Christian [in a smothered voice] Yes . . .

Rozane What is it?

Christian [pushing her gently away] Nothing I have a word or two to say to someone your leave, for a second .

Rozane But .

Christian [pointing at a group of CADETS at the back] In my selfish love, I have kept you from those poor brothers Go, smile on them a little, before they die, dear go!

Rozane [moved] Dear Christian!

[She goes toward the GASCONS at the back, they respectfully gather around her]

Christian [calling toward CYRANO'S tent] Cyrano!

Cyrano [appears, armed for battle] What is it? How pale you are!

Christian She does not love me any more!

Cyrano What do you mean?

Christian She loves you.

Cyrano No!

Christian She only loves my soul!

Cyrano No!

Christian Yes! Therefore it is you she loves . and you love her . . .

Cyrano I

Christian I know it!

Cyrano It is true

Christian To madness!

Cyrano More

Christian Tell her, then.

Cyrano No!

Christian Why not?

Cyrano Look at me!

Christian She would love me grown ugly

Cyrano She told you so?

Christian With the utmost frankness!

Cyrano Ah! I am glad she should have told you that! But, believe me, believe me, place no faith in such a mad asseveration! Dear God, I am glad such a thought should have come to her, and that she should have spoken it,—but believe me, do not take her at her word Never cease to be the handsome fellow you are She would not forgive me!

Christian That is what I wish to discover

Cyrano No! no!

Christian Let her choose between us! You shall tell her everything.

Cyrano No . . No . . I refuse the ordeal!

Christian Shall I stand in the way of your happiness because my outside is not so much amiss?

Cyrano And I? shall I destroy yours, because, thanks to the hazard that sets us upon earth, I have the gift of expressing what you perhaps feel?

Christian You shall tell her everything!

Cyrano He persists in tempting me . It is a mistake and cruel!

Christian I am weary of carrying about, in my own self, a rival!

Cyrano Christian!

Christian Our marriage . . . contracted without witnesses . . can be annulled if we survive!

Cyrano He persists!

Christian Yes I will be loved for my sole self, or not at all!—I am going to see what they are about Look! I will walk to the end of the line and back Tell her, and let her pronounce between us

Cyrano She will pronounce for you



*Christian* I can but hope she will!  
[*calling*] *Roxane*!

*Cyrano* No! No!

*Roxane* [*coming forward*] What is it?

*Christian* *Cyrano* has something to tell you . something important!

[*ROXANE goes hurriedly to CYRANO Exit CHRISTIAN*]

*Roxane* Something important?

*Cyrano* [*distracted*] He is gone! . . .  
[*To ROXANE*] Nothing whatever! He attaches—but you must know him of old!—he attaches importance to trifles

*Roxane* [*quickly*]. He did not believe what I told him a moment ago? . . . I saw that he did not believe . . .

*Cyrano* [*taking her hand*] But did you in very truth tell him the truth?

*Roxane* Yes Yes I should love him even [*She hesitates a second*]

*Cyrano* [*smiling sadly*]. You do not like to say it before me?

*Roxane* But . . .

*Cyrano* I shall not mind! . . . Even if he were ugly?

*Roxane* Yes Ugly [*Musket shots outside*] They are firing!

*Cyrano* [*ardently*] Dreadfully ugly?

*Roxane* Dreadfully

*Cyrano* Disfigured?

*Roxane* Disfigured!

*Cyrano* Grotesque?

*Roxane* Nothing could make him grotesque . to me

*Cyrano* You would love him still?

*Roxane* I believe that I should love him more if that were possible!

*Cyrano* [*losing his head, aside*] My God, perhaps she means it perhaps it is true and that way is happiness [*To ROXANE*] I . *Roxane* listen!

*Le Bret* [*comes in hurriedly, calls softly*] *Cyrano*!

*Cyrano* [*turning*] *Hein*?

*Le Bret* Hush! [*He whispers a few words to CYRANO*]

*CYRANO* [*letting ROXANE'S hand drop, with a cry*] Ah! .

*Roxane* What ails you?

*Cyrano* [*to himself, in consternation*] It is finished! [*Musket reports*]

*Roxane* What is it? What is happening? Who is firing?

[*She goes to the back to look off*]

*Cyrano* It is finished My lips are sealed forevermore!

[*CADETS come in, attempting to conceal something they carry among them, they surround it, preventing ROXANE'S seeing it*]

*Roxane* What has happened?

*Cyrano* [*quickly stopping her as she starts toward them*] Nothing!

*Roxane* These men?

*Cyrano* [*drawing her away*]. Pay no attention to them!

*Roxane* But what were you about to say to me before?

*Cyrano* What was I about to say? . Oh, nothing! Nothing whatever, I assure you [*Solemnly*] I swear that *Christian's* spirit, that his soul, were [*in terror, correcting himself*] are the greatest that

*Roxane* Were? . . . [*With a great cry*] Ah! .

[*Runs to the group of CADETS, and thrusts them aside*]

*Cyrano* It is finished!

*Roxane* [*seeing CHRISTIAN stretched out in his cloak*] *Christian*!

*Le Bret* [*to CYRANO*]. At the enemy's first shot!

[*ROXANE throws herself on CHRISTIAN'S body Musket reports Clashing of swords Tramping Drums*]

*Carbon* [*sword in hand*] The attack! To your muskets!

[*Followed by the CADETS he goes to the further side of the earthworks*]

*Roxane* *Christian*!

*Carbon's Voice* [*beyond the earthworks*] Make haste!

*Roxane* *Christian*!

*Carbon* Fall into line!

*Roxane* *Christian*!

*Carbon* Measure match!

[*RAGUENEAU has come running in with water in a steel cap*]

*Christian* [*in a dying voice*] *Roxane*!

*Cyrano* [*quick, low in CHRISTIAN'S ear, while ROXANE, distracted, dips into the water a fragment of linen torn from her breast to bind his wound*] I have told her everything! You are still the one she loves! [*CHRISTIAN closes his eyes*]

*Roxane* What, dear love?

Carbon Muzzle high!  
 Roxane [to CYRANO] He is not dead?  
 Carbon Open charge . with teeth!  
 Roxane I feel his cheek grow cold against  
 my own!  
 Carbon Take aim!  
 Roxane A letter on his breast . [She  
 opens it] To me!  
 Cyrano [aside] My letter!  
 Carbon Fire!  
 [Muskets shots Cries Roar of  
 battle]

Cyrano [trying to free his hand which  
 ROXANE clasps kneeling] But, Roxane,  
 they are fighting

Roxane [clinging] No! Stay with  
 me a little! He is dead You are the  
 only one that truly knew him . [She  
 cries subduedly] Was he not an exquisite  
 being, an exceptional, marvellous be-  
 ing? . .

Cyrano [standing bareheaded] Yes,  
 Roxane

Roxane A poet without his peer, . . .  
 one verily to reverence?

Cyrano Yes, Roxane

Roxane A sublime spirit?

Cyrano Yes, Roxane

Roxane A profound heart, such as the  
 profane could never have understood . .  
 a soul as noble as it was charming? . .

Cyrano [firmly] Yes, Roxane

Roxane [throwing herself on CHRISTIAN'S  
 body] And he is dead!

Cyrano [aside, drawing his sword] And  
 I have now only to die, since, without know-  
 ing it, she mourns my death in his!

[Trumpets in the distance]

De Guiche [reappears on the top of the  
 bank, bareheaded, his forehead bloody, in  
 a thundering voice] The signal they prom-  
 ised! The flourish of trumpets! . The  
 French are entering the camp with sup-  
 plies! . . Stand fast a little longer!

Roxane Upon his letter . . . blood, .  
 tears!

A Voice [outside, shouting] Surrender!

Voices of the Cadets No!

Ragueneau [who from the top of the  
 coach is watching the battle beyond the  
 bank] The conflict rages hotter! . .

Cyrano [to DE GUICHE pointing at ROX-  
 ANE] Take her away! . . . I am going to  
 charge

Roxane [kissing the letter, in a dying  
 voice] His blood! his tears!

Ragueneau [leaping from the coach and  
 running to ROXANE] She is fainting!

De Guiche [at the top of the bank, to the  
 CADETS, madly] Stand fast!

Voice [outside] Surrender!

Voices of the Cadets No!

Cyrano [to DE GUICHE] Your courage  
 none will question [Pointing at ROX-  
 ANE] Fly for the sake of saving her!

De Guiche [runs to ROXANE and lifts  
 her in his arms] So be it! But we shall  
 win the day if you can hold out a little  
 longer . . .

Cyrano We can [TO ROXANE, whom  
 DE GUICHE, helped by RAGUENEAU, is carry-  
 ing off insensible] Good-bye, Roxane!

[Tumult Cries CADETS reappear,  
 wounded, and fall upon the stage  
 CYRANO dashing forward to join  
 the combatants is stopped on the  
 crest of the bank by CANNON  
 covered with blood]

Carbon We are losing ground . . I  
 have got two halberd wounds .

Cyrano [yelling to the GASCONS] Stead-  
 fast! Never give them an inch!

Brave boys! [TO CANNON] Fear nothing!  
 I have various deaths to avenge Chris-  
 tian's and all my hopes! [They come  
 down CYRANO brandishes the spear at the  
 head of which ROXANE's handkerchief is  
 fastened] Float free, little cobweb flag,  
 embroidered with her initials! [He drives  
 the spear-staff into the earth, shouts to the  
 CADETS] Fall on them, boys! . Crush  
 them! [To the fifer] Fifer, play!

[The fifer plays Some of the  
 wounded get to their feet again  
 Some of the CADETS, coming  
 down the bank, group themselves  
 around CYRANO and the little  
 flag The coach, filled and cov-  
 ered with men, bristles with  
 muskets and becomes a redoubt]

One of the Cadets [appears upon the top  
 of the bank, backing while he fights, he  
 cries] They are coming up the slope!

[Falls dead]

Cyrano We will welcome them!

[Above the bank suddenly rises a  
 formidable array of enemies The  
 great banners of the Imperial  
 Army appear]

*Cyrano* Fire! [General discharge]  
*Cry* [among the hostile ranks] Fire!  
 [Shots returned CADETS drop on every side]

*A Spanish Officer* [taking off his hat]  
 What are these men, so determined all to be killed?

*Cyrano* [declaiming, as he stands in the midst of flying bullets]

*They are the Gascony Cadets  
 Of Carbon de Castel-Jalous;  
 Famed fighters, hars, desperates . . .*

*[He leaps forward, followed by a handful of survivors]*

*They are the Gascony Cadets! . . .*  
*[The rest is lost in the confusion of battle]*

## ACT FIVE

### CYRANO'S GAZETTE

*Fifteen years later, 1655 The park belonging to the convent of the Sisters of the Cross, in Paris*

*Superb shade-trees At the left, the house, several doors opening on to broad terrace with steps In the centre of the stage, huge trees standing alone in a clear oval space At the right, first wing, a semi-circular stone seat, surrounded by large box-trees*

*All along the back of the stage, an avenue of chestnut-trees, which leads, at the right, fourth wing, to the door of a chapel seen through trees Through the double row of trees overarching the avenue are seen lawns, other avenues, clumps of trees, the further recesses of the park, the sky*

*The chapel opens by a small side-door into a colonnade, overrun by a scarlet creeper, the colonnade comes forward and is lost to sight behind the box-trees at the right*

*It is Autumn The leaves are turning, above the still fresh grass Dark patches of evergreens, box and yew Under each tree a mat of yellow leaves Fallen leaves litter the whole stage, crackle underfoot, lie thick on the terrace and the seats*

*Between the seat at the right and the tree in the centre, a large embroidery frame, in front of which a small chair Baskets full of wools, in skeins and balls On the frame, a piece of tapestry, partly done.*

*At the rise of the curtain, nuns come and go in the park, a few are seated on the stone seat around an older nun, leaves are falling*

*Sister Martha* [to MOTHER MARGARET]  
*Sister Claire*, after putting on her cap, went back to the mirror, to see herself again

*Mother Margaret* [to SISTER CLAIRE] It was unbecoming, my child

*Sister Claire* But *Sister Martha*, to-day, after finishing her portion, went back to the tart for a plum. I saw her!

*Mother Margaret* [to SISTER MARTHA]. My child, it was ill done

*Sister Claire* I merely glanced! . . .

*Sister Martha* The plum was about so big!

*Mother Margaret* This evening when *Monsieur Cyrano* comes, I will tell him

*Sister Claire* [alarmed]. No! He will laugh at us!

*Sister Martha*. He will say that nuns are very vain!

*Sister Claire*. And very greedy!

*Mother Margaret* And really very good

*Sister Claire* *Mother Margaret*, is it not true that he has come here every Saturday in the last ten years?

*Mother Margaret* Longer! Ever since his cousin brought among our linen coifs her coif of crape, the worldly symbol of her mourning, which settled like a sable bird amidst our flock of white some fourteen years ago

*Sister Martha* He alone, since she took her abode in our cloister, has art to dispel her never-lessening sorrow

*All the Nuns* He is so droll!—It is merry when he comes!—He teases us!—He is delightful!—We are greatly attached to him!—We are making *Angelica* paste to offer him!

*Sister Martha* He is not, however a very good Catholic!

*Sister Claire* We will convert him

*The Nuns* We will! We will!

*Mother Margaret* I forbid your renewing that attempt, my children Do not trouble him he might not come so often!

*Sister Martha* But God!

*Mother Margaret* Set your hearts at rest—God must know him of old!

*Sister Martha* But every Saturday, when

e comes, he says to me as soon as he sees me, "Sister, I ate meat, yesterday!"

*Mother Margaret* Ah, that is what he says? . Well, when he last said it, he had eaten nothing for two days

*Sister Martha* Mother!

*Mother Margaret* He is poor

*Sister Martha* Who told you?

*Mother Margaret* Monsieur Le Bret

*Sister Martha* Does no one offer him assistance?

*Mother Margaret* No, he would take offence

*[In one of the avenues at the back appears ROXANE, in black, wearing a widow's coif and long mourning veil, DE GUICHE, markedly older, magnificently dressed, walks beside her They go very slowly MOTHER MARGARET gets up]*

*Mother Margaret* Come, we must go within Madame Magdeleine is walking in the park with a visitor

*Sister Martha* [low to SISTER CLAIRE] Is not that the Marshal-duke de Grammont?

*Sister Claire* [looking] I think it is!

*Sister Martha* He has not been to see her in many months!

*The Nuns* He is much engaged!—The Court!—The Camp!—

*Sister Claire* Cares of this world!

*[Exeunt DE GUICHE and ROXANE come forward silently, and stop near the embroidery frame A pause]*

*De Guiche* And so you live here, uselessly fair, always in mourning?

*Roxane* Always

*De Guiche* As faithful as of old?

*Roxane* As faithful

*De Guiche* [after a time] Have you forgiven me?

*Roxane* Since I am here

*De Guiche* And he was really such a rare being?

*Roxane* To understand, one must have known him!

*De Guiche* Ah, one must have known him! Perhaps I did not know him well enough And his last letter, still and always, against your heart?

*Roxane* I wear it on this velvet, as a more holy scapular

*De Guiche* Even dead, you love him?

*Roxane* It seems to me sometimes he is but half dead, that our hearts have not been severed, that his love still wiaps me round, no less than ever living!

*De Guiche* [after another silence] Does Cyrano come here to see you?

*Roxane* Yes, often That faithful friend fulfils by me the office of gazette His visits are regular He comes when the weather is fine, his armchair is brought out under the trees I wait for him here with my work; the hour strikes, on the last stroke, I hear—I do not even turn to see who comes!—his cane upon the steps, he takes his seat, he rallies me upon my never-ending tapestry, he tells off the events of the week, and . *[LE BRET appears on the steps]* Ah, Le Bret! *[LE BRET comes down the steps]* How does your friend?

*Le Bret* Ill

*De Guiche* Oh!

*Roxane* He exaggerates! . . .

*Le Bret* All is come to pass as I foretold neglect! poverty! his writings ever breeding him new enemies! Fraud he attacks in every embodiment usurpers, pious pretenders, plagiarists, asses in lions' skins all! He attacks all!

*Roxane* No one, however, but stands in profound respect of his sword They will never succeed in silencing him

*De Guiche* [shaking his head] Who knows?

*Le Bret* What I fear is not the aggression of man, what I fear is loneliness and want and winter creeping upon him like stealthy wolves in his miserable attic, they are the insidious foes that will have him by the throat at last! Every day he tightens his belt by an eyelet, his poor great nose is pinched, and turned the sal-low of old ivory, the worn black serge you see him in is the only coat he has!

*De Guiche* Ah, there is one who did not succeed! Nevertheless, do not pity him too much

*Le Bret* [with a bitter smile] Marshall!

*De Guiche* Do not pity him too much he signed no bonds with the world, he has lived free in his thought as in his actions

*Le Bret* [as above] Duke

*De Guiche* [haughtily] I know, yes I

have everything, he has nothing But  
I should like to shake hands with him  
[*Bowing to ROXANE*] Good-bye

*Roxane* I will go with you to the door.

[*DE GUICHE bows to LE BRET and goes with ROXANE toward the terrace steps*]

*De Guiche* [*stopping while she goes up the steps*] Yes, sometimes I envy him You see, when a man has succeeded too well in life, he is not unlikely to feel—dear me! without having committed any very serious wrong!—a multitudinous disgust of himself, the sum of which does not constitute a real remorse, but an obscure uneasiness, and a ducal mantle, while it sweeps up the stairs of greatness, may trail in its furry lining a rustling of sere illusions and regrets, as, when you slowly climb toward those doors, your black gown trails the withered leaves

*Roxane* [*ironical*] Are you not unusually pensive? . . .

*De Guiche* Ah, yes! [*As he is about to leave, abruptly*] Monsieur Le Bret [*To ROXANE*] Will you allow me? A word [*He goes to LE BRET, and lowering his voice*] It is true that no one will dare overtly to attack your friend, but many have him in particular disrelish, and some one was saying to me yesterday, at the Queen's, "It seems not unlikely that this Cyrano will meet with an accident"

*Le Bret* Ah? . . .

*De Guiche* Yes Let him keep indoors Let him be cautious

*Le Bret* [*lifting his arms toward Heaven*] Cautious! . . . He is coming here I will warn him Warn him! Yes, but

*Roxane* [*who has been standing at the head of the steps, to a nun who comes toward her*] What is it?

*The Nun* Ragueneau begs to see you, Madame

*Roxane* Let him come in [*To DE GUICHE and LE BRET*] He comes to plead distress Having determined one day to be an author, he became in turn precen-tor . . .

*Le Bret* Bath-house keeper . . .

*Roxane* Actor . . .

*Le Bret* Beadle . . .

*Roxane* Barber

*Le Bret* Arch-lute teacher . . .

*Roxane* I wonder what he is now!

*Ragueneau* [*entering precipitately*] Ah, madame! [*He sees LE BRET*] Monsieur!

*Roxane* [*smiling*] Begin telling your misfortunes to Le Bret I am coming back.

*Ragueneau* But, madame . . .

[*ROXANE leaves without listening, with the DUKE RAGUENEAU goes to LE BRET*]

*Ragueneau* It is better so Since you are here, I had liefer not tell her! Less than half an hour ago, I was going to see your friend I was not thirty feet from his door, when I saw him come out I hurried to catch up with him He was about to turn the corner I started to run, when from a window below which he was passing—was it pure mischance? It may have been!—a lackey drops a block of wood . . .

*Le Bret.* Ah, the cowards! . . . Cyrano!

*Ragueneau* I reach the spot, and find him . . .

*Le Bret* Horrible!

*Ragueneau* Our friend, monsieur, our poet, stretched upon the ground, with a great hole in his head!

*Le Bret* He is dead?

*Ragueneau* No, but God have mercy! I carried him to his lodging . . . Ah, his lodging! You should see that lodging of his!

*Le Bret* Is he in pain?

*Ragueneau* No, monsieur, he is unconscious

*Le Bret* Has a doctor seen him?

*Ragueneau* One came out of good nature

*Le Bret* My poor, poor Cyrano! We must not tell Roxane outright And the doctor? . . .

*Ragueneau* He talked I hardly grasped of fever cerebral inflammation! Ah, if you should see him, with his head done up in cloths! Let us hurry

No one is there to tend him . . . And he might die if he attempted to get up!

*Le Bret* [*dragging RAGUENEAU off at the right*] This way Come, it is shorter through the chapel

*Roxane* [*appearing at the head of the steps, catching sight of LE BRET hurrying off through the colonnade which leads to the chapel side-door*] Monsieur Le Bret! [*LE BRET and RAGUENEAU make their escape without answering*] Le Bret not turn-

ing back when he is called? Poor Ragueneau must be in some new trouble! *[She comes down the steps]* How beautiful how beautiful, this golden-hazy waning day of September at its wane! My sorrowful mood, which the exuberant gladness of April offends, Autumn, the dreamy and subdued, lures on to smile *[She sits down at her embroidery frame]* Two NUNS come from the house bringing a large armchair which they place under the tree! Ah, here comes the classic armchair in which my old friend always sits!

*Sister Martha* The best in the convent parlor!

*Roxane* I thank you, sister *[The nuns withdraw]* He will be here in a moment *[She adjusts the embroidery frame before her]* There! The clock is striking

My woofs! The clock has struck?

I wonder at this! Is it possible that for the first time he is late? It must be that the sister who keeps the door my thimble? ah, here it is! is detaining him to exhort him to repentance *[A pause]* She exhorts him at some length! He cannot be much longer A withered leaf! *[She brushes away the dead leaf which has dropped on the embroidery]* Surely nothing could keep My scissors? in my work-bag! could keep him from coming!

A Nun *[appearing at the head of the steps]* Monsieur de Bergerac!

*Roxane* *[without turning round]* What was I saying? *[She begins to embroider]* CYRANO appears, exceedingly pale, his hat drawn down over his eyes The NUN who has shown him into the garden, withdraws He comes down the steps very slowly, with evident difficulty to keep on his feet, leaning heavily on his cane ROXANE proceeds with her sewing! Ah, these dull soft shades! How shall I match them?

*[To CYRANO, in a tone of friendly chiding]* After fourteen years, for the first time you are late!

*Cyrano* *[who has reached the armchair and seated himself, in a jolly voice which contrasts with his face]* Yes, it seems incredible! I am savage at it I was detained, spite of all I could do! . . .

*Roxane* By?

*Cyrano* A somewhat inopportune call.

*Roxane* *[absent-minded, sewing]* Ah, yes some troublesome fellow!

*Cyrano* Cousin, it was a troublesome Madam

*Roxane* You excused yourself?

*Cyrano* Yes I said, "Your pardon, but this is Saturday, on which day I am due in a certain dwelling On no account do I ever fail Come back in an hour!"

*Roxane* *[lightly]* Well, she will have to wait some time to see you I shall not let you go before evening

*Cyrano* Perhaps I shall have to go a little earlier

*[He closes his eyes and is silent a moment]* SISTER MARTHA is seen crossing the park from the chapel to the terrace ROXANE sees her and beckons to her by a slight motion of her head!

*Roxane* *[to CYRANO]* Are you not going to tease Sister Martha to-day?

*Cyrano* *[quickly, opening his eyes]* I am indeed! *[In a comically gruff voice]* Sister Martha, come nearer! *[The NUN demurely comes toward him]* Ha! ha! ha! Beautiful eyes, ever studying the ground!

*Sister Martha* *[lifting her eyes and smiling]* But *[She sees his face and makes a gesture of surprise]* Oh!

*Cyrano* *[low, pointing at ROXANE]* Hush! It is nothing! *[In a swaggering voice, aloud]* Yesterday, I ate meat!

*Sister Martha* I am sure you did! *[Aside]* That is why he is so pale! *[Quickly, low]* Come to the refectory presently I shall have ready for you there a good bowl of broth You will come!

*Cyrano* Yes, yes, yes

*Sister Martha* Ah, you are more reasonable to-day!

*Roxane* *[hearing them whisper]*. She is trying to convert you?

*Sister Martha* Indeed I am not!

*Cyrano* It is true, you, usually almost discursive in the holy cause, are reading me no sermon! You amaze me! *[With comical fury]* I will amaze you, too! Listen, you are authorized *[With the air of casting about in his mind, and finding the jest he wants]* Ah, now I shall amaze you! to pray for me, this evening in the chapel

*Roxane* Oh! oh!

*Cyrano* [laughing] Sister Martha . . . lost in amazement!

*Sister Martha* [gently]. I did not wait for your authorization [She goes in]

*Cyrano* [turning to ROXANE, who is bending over her embroidery] The devil, tapestry . . . the devil, if I hope to live to see the end of you!

*Roxane*. I was waiting for that jest

[A slight gust of wind makes the leaves fall]

*Cyrano* The leaves!

*Roxane* [looking up from her work and gazing off toward the avenues] They are the russet gold of a Venetian beauty's hair Watch them fall!

*Cyrano* How consummately they do it! In that brief fluttering from bough to ground, how they contrive still to put beauty! And though foredoomed to moulder upon the earth that draws them, they wish their fall invested with the grace of a free bird's flight!

*Roxane* Serious, you?

*Cyrano* [remembering himself] Not at all, Roxane!

*Roxane* Come, never mind the falling leaves! Tell me the news, instead . . . Where is my budget?

*Cyrano* Here it is!

*Roxane* Ah!

*Cyrano* [growing paler and paler, and struggling with pain] Saturday, the nineteenth The king having filled his dish eight times with Cette preserves, and emptied it, was taken with a fever his distemper, for high treason, was condemned to be let blood, and now the royal pulse is rid of febriculousity! On Sunday at the Queen's great ball, were burned seven hundred and sixty-three wax candles, our troops, it is said, defeated Austrian John, four sorcerers were hanged, Madame Athis's little dog had a distressing turn, the case called for a .

*Roxane* Monsieur de Bergerac, leave out the little dog!

*Cyrano*. Monday, . . . nothing, or next to it, Lygdamire took a fresh lover

*Roxane* Oh!

*Cyrano* [lover whose face is coming a change more and more marked] Tuesday the whole Court assembled at Fontainebleau Wednesday, the fair Monglat said to Count Fiesco "No!" Thursday, Man-

cini, Queen of France, . . . or little less. Twenty-fifth, the fair Monglat said to Count Fiesco "Yes!" And Saturday, the twenty-sixth . . . [He closes his eyes His head drops on his breast Silence]

*Roxane* [surprised at hearing nothing further, turns, looks at him and starts to her feet in alarm] Has he fainted? [She runs to him, calling] *Cyrano*!

*Cyrano* [opening his eyes, in a faint voice] What is it? . . . What is the matter! [He sees ROXANE bending over him, hurriedly readjusts his hat, pulling it more closely over his head, and shrinks back in his armchair in terror] No! no! I assure you, it is nothing! . . . Do not mind me!

*Roxane* But surely . . .

*Cyrano*. It is merely the wound I received at Arras . . . Sometimes . . . you know . . . even now . . .

*Roxane* Poor friend!

*Cyrano*. But it is nothing . . . It will pass . . . [He smiles with effort] It has passed

*Roxane*. Each one of us has his wound: I too have mine It is here, never to heal, that ancient wound [She places her hand on her breast] It is here, beneath the yellowing letter on which are still faintly visible tear-drops and drops of blood!

[The light is beginning to grow less]

*Cyrano* His letter? . . . Did you not once say that some day . . . you might show it to me?

*Roxane* Ah! . . . Do you wish? . . . His letter?

*Cyrano* Yes . . . to-day . . . I wish to . . .

*Roxane* [handing him the little bag from her neck] Here!

*Cyrano* I may open it?

*Roxane* Open it read!

[She goes back to her embroidery frame, folds it up, orders her wools]

*Cyrano* "Good-bye, Roxane! I am going to die!"

*Roxane* [stopping in astonishment] You are reading it aloud?

*Cyrano* [reading] "It is fated to come this evening, beloved, I believe! My soul is heavy, oppressed with love it had not time to utter . . . and now Time is at



end! Never again, never again shall my worshipping eyes . . ."

Roxane How strangely you read his letter!

Cyrano [continuing] ". . . whose passionate revel it was, kiss in its fleeting grace your every gesture One, usual to you, of tucking back a little curl, comes to my mind . . . and I cannot refrain from crying out . . ."

Roxane How strangely you read his letter!

[The darkness gradually increases]

Cyrano "and I cry out Good-bye!"

Roxane You read it . . .

Cyrano "my dearest, my darling, . . . my treasure . . ."

Roxane . . . in a voice . . .

Cyrano ". . . my love! . . ."

Roxane . . . in a voice . . . a voice which I am not hearing for the first time!

[ROXANE comes quietly nearer to him, without his seeing it, she steps behind his armchair, bends noiselessly over his shoulder, looks at the letter The darkness deepens]

Cyrano "My heart never desisted for a second from your side and I am and shall be in the world that has no end, the one who loved you without measure, the one . . ."

Roxane [laying her hand on his shoulder] How can you go on reading? It is dark [CYRANO starts, and turns round, sees her close to him, makes a gesture of dismay and hangs his head Then, in the darkness which has completely closed round them, she says slowly, clasping her hands] And he, for fourteen years, has played the part of the comical old friend who came to cheer me!

Cyrano Roxane!

Roxane So it was you

Cyrano No, no, Roxane!

Roxane I ought to have divined it, if only by the way in which he speaks my name!

Cyrano No, it was not I!

Roxane So it was you!

Cyrano I swear to you . . .

Roxane Ah, I detect at last the whole generous imposture The letters . . . were yours!

Cyrano No!

Roxane The tender fancy, the dear folly, . . . yours!

Cyrano No!

Roxane. The voice in the night, was yours!

Cyrano I swear to you that it was not!

Roxane The soul . . . was yours!

Cyrano I did not love you, no!

Roxane And you loved me!

Cyrano Not I . . . it was the other!

Roxane You loved me!

Cyrano No!

Roxane Already your denial comes more faintly!

Cyrano No, no, my darling love, I did not love you!

Roxane Ah, how many things within the hour have died . . . how many have been born! Why, why have . . . been silent these long years, when on this letter, in which he had no part, the tears were yours?

Cyrano [handing her the letter]. Because the blood was his

Roxane Then why let the sublime bond of this silence be loosed to-day?

Cyrano Why?

[LE BRET and RAGUENEAU enter running]

Le Bret Madness! Monstrous madness! Ah, I was sure of it! There he is!

Cyrano [smiling and straightening himself] Tiens! Where else?

Le Bret Madame, he is likely to have got his death by getting out of bed!

Roxane Merciful God! A moment ago, then . . . that faintness . . . that . . . ?

Cyrano It is true I had not finished telling you the news And on Saturday, the twenty-sixth, an hour after sundown, Monsieur de Bergerac died of murder done upon him [He takes off his hat, his head is seen wrapped in bandages]

Roxane What is he saying? Cyrano? . . . Those bandages about his head? . . . Ah, what have they done to you? . . . Why? . . .

Cyrano "Happy who falls, cut off by a hero, with an honest sword through his heart!" I am quoting from myself! Fate will have his laugh at us! Here am I killed, in a trap, from behind, by a lackey, with a log! Nothing could be completer! In my whole life I shall have



not had anything I wanted . . not even a decent death!

*Ragueneau* Ah, monsieur!

*Cyrano* *Ragueneau*, do not sob like that! [*Holding out his hand to him*] And what is the news with you, these latter days, fellow-poet?

*Ragueneau* [*through his tears*]. I am candle-snuffer at Molière's theatre.

*Cyrano* Molière!

*Ragueneau* But I intend to leave no later than to-morrow. Yes, I am indignant! Yesterday, they were giving Scapin, and I saw that he has appropriated a scene of yours

*Le Bret* A whole scene?

*Ragueneau* Yes, monsieur The one in which occurs the famous "What the devil was he doing in . ."

*Le Bret* Molière has taken that from you!

*Cyrano* Hush! hush! He did well to take it! [*To RAGUENEAU*] The scene was very effective, was it not?

*Ragueneau*. Ah, monsieur, the public laughed laughed!

*Cyrano* Yes, to the end, I shall have been the one who prompted . and was forgotten! [*To ROXANE*] Do you remember that evening on which Christian spoke to you from below the balcony? There was the epitome of my life while I have stood below in darkness, others have climbed to gather the kiss and glory! It is well done, and on the brink of my grave I approve it Molière has genius . Christian was a fine fellow! [*At this moment, the chapel bell having rung, the NUNS are seen passing at the back, along the avenue, on their way to service*] Let them hasten to their prayers . the bell is summoning them . .

*Roxane* [*rising and calling*] Sister! Sister!

*Cyrano* [*holding her back*] No! No! do not leave me to fetch anybody! When you came back I might not be here to rejoice . [*The NUNS have gone into the chapel, the organ is heard*] I longed for a little music it comes in time!

*Roxane* I love you . you shall live!

*Cyrano* No! for it is only in the fairy-tale that the shy and awkward prince when he hears the beloved say "I love you!" feels his ungainliness melt and drop

from him in the sunshine of those words!

But you would always know full well, dear heart, that there had taken place in your poor slave no beautifying change!

*Roxane* I have hurt you . . . I have wrecked your life, I! . I!

*Cyrano* You? . The reverse! Woman's sweetness I had never known My mother . . thought me unflattering I had no sister Later, I shunned Love's crossroad in fear of mocking eyes To you I owe having had, at least, among the gentle and fair, a friend Thanks to you there has passed across my life the rustle of a woman's gown

*Le Bret* [*calling his attention to the moonlight peering through the branches*] Your other friend, among the gentle and fair, is there she comes to see you!

*Cyrano* [*smiling to the moon*] I see her!

*Roxane* I never loved but one . . . and twice I lose him!

*Cyrano* *Le Bret*, I shall ascend into the opalescent moon, without need this time of a flying-machine!

*Roxane* What are you saying?

*Cyrano* Yes, it is there, you may be sure, I shall be sent for my Paradise More than one soul of those I have loved must be apportioned there There I shall find Socrates and Galileo!

*Le Bret* [*in revolt*] No! No! It is too senseless, too cruel, too unfair! So true a poet! So great a heart! To die like this! To die! . .

*Cyrano* As ever . . . *Le Bret* is grumbling!

*Le Bret* [*bursting into tears*] My friend! My friend!

*Cyrano* [*lifting himself, his eyes wild*] They are the Gascony Cadets! Man in the gross Eh, yes! . . . the weakness of the weakest point . .

*Le Bret* Learned . . even in his delirium!

*Cyrano* Copernicus said . . .

*Roxane* Oh!

*Cyrano* But what the devil was he doing and what the devil was he doing in that galley?

*Philosopher and physicist,  
Musician, rhymester, duellist,  
Explorer of the upper blue,  
Retorter apt with point and point,*

*Lover as well,—not for his peace!*

*Here lies Hercule Savimen*

*De Cyrano de Bergerac,*

Who was everything but of account!  
But, your pardons, I must go I wish  
to keep no one waiting See, a moon-  
beam, come to take me home! [*He has  
dropped in his chair, ROXANE's weeping  
calls him back to reality, he looks at her  
and gently strokes her mourning veil*] I  
do not wish indeed, I do not wish  
that you should sorrow less for Christian,  
the comely and the kind! Only I wish  
that when the everlasting cold shall have  
seized upon my fibres, this funereal veil  
should have a twofold meaning, and the  
mourning you wear for him be worn for  
me too a little!

Roxane I promise . .

Cyrano [*seized with a great shivering,  
starts to his feet*] Not there! No! Not  
in an elbow-chair! [*All draw nearer to  
help him*] Let no one stay me! No one!  
[*He goes and stands against the tree*]  
Nothing but this tree! [*Silence*] She  
comes, Mors, the indiscriminate Madam!

Already I am booted with marble  
gauntleted with lead! [*He stiffens  
himself*] Ah, since she is on her way, I  
will await her standing . [*He draws  
his sword*] Sword in hand!

Le Bret Cyrano!

Roxane [*swooning*] Cyrano!

[*All start back, terrified*]

Cyrano I believe she is looking at me  
that she dares to look at my nose,  
the bony baggage who has none! [*He*

*raises his sword*] What are you saying?  
That it is no use? I know it! But  
one does not fight because there is hope of  
winning! No! no! it is much  
finer to fight when it is no use! . What  
are all those? You are a thousand strong?

Ah, I know you now all my ancient  
enemies! . Hypocrisy? [*He beats  
with his sword, in the vacancy*] Take this!  
and this! Ha! Ha! Compromises?

and Prejudices? and dastardly Expedients?  
[*He strikes*] That I should come to terms,  
I? Never! Never! Ah, you are  
there too, you, bloated and pompous Silli-  
ness! I know full well that you will lay  
me low at last No matter whilst I  
have breath, I will fight you, I will fight  
you, I will fight you! [*He waves his sword  
in great sweeping circles, and stops, pant-*

*ing*] Yes, you have wrested from me every-  
thing, laurel as well as rose Work  
your wills! Spite of your worst, some-  
thing will still be left me to take whither  
I go and to-night when I enter God's  
house, in saluting, broadly will I sweep  
the azure threshold with what in spite of  
all I carry forth unblemished and unbent

[*He starts forward, with lifted sword*]  
and that is

[*The sword falls from his hands,  
he staggers, drops in the arms  
of LE BRET and RAGUENEAU*]

Roxane [*bending over him and kissing  
his forehead*] That is?

Cyrano [*opens his eyes again, recognizes  
her and says with a smile*] My plume!

THE END



THE LOWER DEPTHS

(NA DNYE)

By MAXIM GORKY

*Translated from the Russian by JENNY COVAN*

*The Lower Depths*, A Drama in Four Acts by Maxim Gorky, translated by Jenny Covan Copyright, 1922, by Morris Gest, republished by permission of Coward-McCann, Inc, from *The Moscow Art Theatre Series of Russian Plays*, Vol 2

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## MAXIM GORKY AND THE NATURALISTIC PLAY

ALEXEI MAXIMOVITCH PYESHKOV, who wrote under the pen name of Maxim Gorky ("The Bitter One") was born in 1868 at Nizhni Novgorod, Russia. Orphaned at an early age, he underwent the harsh treatment which forms the matter of so much of his work, he was subjected to a cruel foster father and sent out to earn his living at the age of ten, he drifted from one menial job to another and was generally depressed, rejected, and maltreated. The effect on him of these early experiences is easily anticipated. He discovered that "the whole structure of society was almost completely devoid of human sympathy." Comfort came to him almost entirely from books, such companions as he sought among political suspects and social outcasts only getting him in difficulties with the police. The latter indeed dogged him for the better part of his career, and until the founding of the Soviet state he was not infrequently in jail.

After a few ventures in writing short stories, often radical in content or theme, Gorky suddenly found himself a popular success. Anton Tchekhov, interesting himself in the young writer's career, urged him to turn his attention to the theatre. Tchekhov was at the time confined to the Crimea by his health, so Gorky visited the peninsula to learn from his master. By coincidence, the Moscow Art Players were also visiting the Crimea to give their great playwright a chance to see his works on the stage. The writing and production of *The Lower Depths* grew out of this fortunate conjunction, resulting in the greatest triumph in the Theatre's history and the founding of a literary career which was to lead Gorky to the highest position in the hierarchy of Soviet artists. For Gorky, when he died in 1936, had become the official spokesman for Joseph Stalin and, as the leader of modern Russian men of letters, had twice been honored by his country with national celebrations. He is in fact the one great literary figure that the U.S.S.R. has produced.

It should be pointed out, however, that Gorky was already a classic in Russia before the Revolution. *The Lower Depths* is no more a piece of Communist propaganda than is *The Cherry Orchard*. It is rather a transcription of the life which the author had led in the style perhaps most typical of the late nineteenth century—naturalism. Although naturalism has been briefly discussed in the General Introduction, a few additional details may assist in the evaluation of Gorky's achievement. *The Lower Depths* appears to be a completely shapeless play without climax or forward movement. The characters wander in and out, apparently unchanged by the situations in which they find themselves, every event is carefully blunted to remove its "theatrical" quality.

The creed of the naturalist was stated by Emile Zola when he declared that there should be no school, no formula, no standard of any sort, only life itself. The action should not consist of a story invented for the occasion, but in the inner struggle of the characters. In the naturalistic drama there is to be no "logic of events," but only the logic of sentiment and emotion. The artist is to join with the scientist in presenting the objective truth about life. There is no occasion to reply to Zola today—the objective and irresponsible pursuit of The Truth by experimental scientists has not always proved such a benefit to the progress of humanity as their discoveries in the nineteenth century promised. The artist, as distinguished from the experimental scientist, has always his responsibility to consider. Men look to him not merely for observation but for interpretation. His basic tool is neither his physical eye nor his microscope, but the inward eye which sees, as the great poet declared, into the heart of things.

This inward eye Gorky, as an exponent of naturalism, possessed. It is evident in his comment, quoted above, on the society about him. It was developed, perhaps, through his contacts with Tchekhov, who had, it is true, the doctor's perception but also the humanitarian's sympathy. And from the poor shreds of bourgeois dignity presented with understanding and without reproach in *The Sea Gull* and *The Three Sisters* it is a step downward only in terms of society to the human remnants of *The Lower Depths*.

Gorky's masterpiece is naturalistic in that its characters are fully formed by their environment and heredity. It is naturalistic in that the naturalist was prone to deal with the underworld in response to the social-democratic movement of the times. But it is a

work of art, with universal implications, in that every man may here see himself, confused, blinded, and trapped by the incomprehensible forces that surround him

It is a work of art, too, in its form, disguised though the form may be. Using the Tchekhovian technique of almost mechanical contrast between one group of characters and another, one mood and another, Gorky has produced, not "the slice of life" desired by Zola, but an arrangement of life which has, for all its apparent haphazardness, an evident meaning. The characters do not aimlessly arrive in the lodging, they have been selected by the author. The appearance, too, of Luka on this particular evening creates a conflict the working out of which establishes the theme of the play. Gorky, finally, has invested his simple properties with symbolic meanings: the novel which the prostitute is so devotedly reading acquires an almost Ibsenic importance in the plot.

*The Lower Depths* was first produced at the Moscow Art Theatre in 1902. Its fame spread quickly. In 1903 it was played in Berlin, in London, and in New York. It has since become a classic in the repertory of college and little theatres throughout the world.

### CHARACTERS

MIKHAIL IVANOFF KOSTILYOFF, *keeper of a night lodging*

VASSILISA KARPOVNA, *his wife*

NATASHA, *her sister*

MIEDVIEDIEFF, *her uncle, a policeman*

VASKA PEPEL, *a young thief*

ANDREI MITRICH KLESHTCH, *a locksmith*

ANNA, *his wife*

NASTYA, *a street-walker*

KVASHNYA, *a vendor of meat-pies*

BUBNOFF, *a cap-maker*

THE BARON

SATINE

THE ACTOR

LUKA, *a pilgrim*

ALYOSHKA, *a shoemaker*

KRIVoy ZOBy {

THE TARTAR { *Porters*

*Night Lodgers, Tramps and Others*

*The action takes place in a night lodging and in "The Waste," an area in its rear*

## THE LOWER DEPTHS

### ACT ONE

*A cellar resembling a cave The ceiling, which merges into stone walls, is low and grimy, and the plaster and paint are peeling off There is a window, high up on the right wall, from which comes the light The right corner, which constitutes PEPEL'S room, is partitioned off by thin boards Close to the corner of this room is BUBNOFF'S wooden bunk In the left corner stands a large Russian stove In the stone wall, left, is a door leading to the kitchen where live KVASHNYA, the BARON, and NASTYA Against the wall, between the stove and the door, is a large bed covered with dirty chintz Bunks line the walls In the foreground, by the left wall, is a block of wood with a vise and a small anvil fastened to it, and another smaller block of wood somewhat further towards the back KLESHTCH is seated on the smaller block, trying keys into old locks At his feet are two large bundles of various keys, wired together, also a battered tin samovar, a hammer, and pincers In the center are a large table, two benches, and a stool, all of which are of dirty, unpainted wood Behind the table KVASHNYA is busy-ing herself with the samovar The BARON sits chewing a piece of black bread, and NASTYA occupies the stool, leans her elbows on the table, and reads a tattered book In the bed, behind curtains, ANNA lies coughing BUBNOFF is seated on his bunk, attempting to shape a pair of old trousers with the help of an ancient hat shape which he holds between his knees Scattered about him are pieces of buckram, oilcloth, and rags SATINE, just awakened, lies in his bunk, grunting On top of the stove, the ACTOR, invisible to the audience, tosses about and coughs*

*It is an early spring morning*

*The Baron And then?*

*Kvashnya No, my dear, said I, keep away from me with such proposals I've been through it all, you see—and not for a*

hundred baked lobsters would I marry again!

*Bubnoff [to SATINE] What are you grunting about? [SATINE keeps on grunting]*

*Kvashnya Why should I, said I, a free woman, my own mistress, enter my name into somebody else's passport and sell myself into slavery—no! Why—I wouldn't marry a man even if he were an American prince!*

*Kleshtch You he!*

*Kvashnya Wha-at?*

*Kleshtch. You he! You're going to marry Abramka*

*The Baron [snatching the book out of NASTYA'S hand and reading the title] "Fatal Love" [Laughs]*

*Nastya [stretching out her hand] Give it back—give it back! Stop fooling!*

*[The BARON looks at her and waves the book in the air]*

*Kvashnya [to KLESHTCH] You crimson goat, you—calling me a liar! How dare you be so rude to me?*

*The Baron [hitting NASTYA on the head with the book] Nastya, you little fool!*

*Nastya [reaching for the book] Give it back!*

*Kleshtch Oh—what a great lady but you'll marry Abramka just the same—that's all you're waiting for*

*Kvashnya Sure! Anything else? You nearly beat your wife to death!*

*Kleshtch Shut up, you old bitch! It's none of your business!*

*Kvashnya Ho-ho! can't stand the truth, can you?*

*The Baron They're off again! Nastya, where are you?*

*Nastya [without lifting her head] Hey—go away!*

*Anna [putting her head through the curtains] The day has started For God's sake, don't row!*

*Kleshtch Whining again!*

*Anna Every blessed day let me die in peace, can't you?*



*Bubnoff* Noise won't keep you from dying

*Kvashnya* [walking up to ANNA] Little mother, how did you ever manage to live with this wretch?

*Anna* Leave me alone—get away from me

*Kvashnya* Well, well! You poor soul how's the pain in the chest—any better?

*The Baron* Kvashnya! Time to go to market . .

*Kvashnya* We'll go presently [To ANNA] Like some hot dumplings?

*Anna* No, thanks Why should I eat?

*Kvashnya*. You must eat Hot food—good for you! I'll leave you some in a cup Eat them when you feel like it Come on, sir! [To KLESHTCH] You evil spirit!

[Goes into kitchen]

*Anna* [coughing] Lord, Lord

*The Baron* [painfully pushing forward NASTYA'S head]. Throw it away—little fool!

*Nastya* [muttering] Leave me alone—I don't bother you

[The BARON follows KVASHNYA, whistling]

*Satine* [sitting up in his bunk] Who beat me up yesterday?

*Bubnoff* Does it make any difference who?

*Satine* Suppose they did—but why did they?

*Bubnoff*. Were you playing cards?

*Satine* Yes!

*Bubnoff* That's why they beat you

*Satine* Scoundrels!

*The Actor* [raising his head from the top of the stove] One of these days they'll beat you to death!

*Satine* You're a jackass!

*The Actor* Why?

*Satine* Because a man can die only once!

*The Actor* [after a silence] I don't understand—

*Kleshtch* Say! You crawl from that stove—and start cleaning house! Don't play the delicate primrose!

*The Actor* None of your business!

*Kleshtch* Wait till Vassilisa comes—she'll show you whose business it is!

*The Actor* To hell with Vassilisa! To-day is the Baron's turn to clean . . Baron!

*The Baron* I've no time to clean I'm going to market with Kvashnya

*The Actor* That doesn't concern me Go to the gallows if you like It's your turn to sweep the floor just the same—I'm not going to do other people's work

*The Baron* Go to blazes! Nastya will do it Hey there—fatal love! Wake up!

[Takes the book away from NASTYA]

*Nastya* [getting up] What do you want? Give it back to me! You scoundrell! And that's a nobleman for you!

*The Baron* [returning the book to her] Nastya! Sweep the floor for me—will you?

*Nastya* [goes to kitchen] Not so's you'll notice it!

*Kvashnya* [to the BARON through kitchen door] Come on—you! They don't need you! Actor! You were asked to do it, and now you go ahead and attend to it—it won't kill you

*The Actor* It's always I I don't understand why

[The BARON comes from the kitchen, across his shoulders a wooden beam from which hang earthen pots covered with rags]

*The Baron* Heavier than ever!

*Satine*. It paid you to be born a Baron, eh?

*Kvashnya* [to ACTOR] See to it that you sweep up! [Crosses to outer door, letting the BARON pass ahead]

THE ACTOR [climbing down from the stove] It's bad for me to inhale dust [With pride] My organism is poisoned with alcohol [Sits down on a bunk, meditating]

*Satine* Organism—organon .

*Anna* Andrei Mitritch .

*Kleshtch* What now?

*Anna* Kvashnya left me some dumpings over there—you eat them!

*Kleshtch* [coming over to her] And you—don't you want any?

*Anna* No Why should I eat? You're a workman—you need it

*Kleshtch* Frightened, are you? Don't be! You'll get all right!

*Anna* Go and eat! It's hard on me I suppose very soon

*Kleshtch* [walking away] Never mind—maybe you'll get well—you can never tell! [Goes into kitchen]

*The Actor* [loud, as if he had suddenly awakened] Yesterday the doctor in the

said, "is entirely poisoned with alcohol"

*Satine* [smiling] Organon

*The Actor* [stubbornly] Not organon—organism!

*Satine* Sibylline

*The Actor* [shaking his fist at him] Nonsense! I'm telling you seriously if the organism is poisoned that means it's bad for me to sweep the floor—to inhale the dust

*Satine* Macrobistic hah!

*Bubnoff* What are you muttering?

*Satine* Words—and here's another one for you—transcendentalistic

*Bubnoff* What does it mean?

*Satine* Don't know—I forgot

*Bubnoff* Then why did you say it?

*Satine* Just so! I'm bored, brother, with human words—all our words Bored! I've heard each one of them a thousand times surely

*The Actor* In *Hamlet* they say "Words, words, words!" It's a good play I played the grave-digger in it once

[KLESHTCH comes from the kitchen]

*Kleshtch* Will you start playing with the broom?

*The Actor* None of your business [Striking his chest] Ophelia! O—remember me in thy prayers!

[Back stage is heard a dull murmur, cries, and a police whistle KLESHTCH sits down to work, filing screechily]

*Satine* I love unintelligible, obsolete words When I was a youngster—and worked as a telegraph operator—I read heaps of books

*Bubnoff* Were you really a telegrapher?

*Satine* I was There are some excellent books—and lots of curious words Once I was an educated man, do you know?

*Bubnoff* I've heard it a hundred times Well, so you were! That isn't very important! Me—well—once I was a furrier I had my own shop—what with dyeing the fur all day long, my arms were yellow up to the elbows, brother I thought I'd never be able ever to get clean again—that I'd go to my grave, all yellow! But look at my hands now—they're plain dirty—that's what!

*Satine* Well, and what then?

*Bubnoff* That's all!

*Satine* What are you trying to prove?

*Bubnoff* Oh, well—just matching

thoughts—no matter how much dye you get on yourself, it all comes off in the end—yes, yes—

*Satine* Oh—my bones ache!

*The Actor* [sits, nursing his knees] Education is all rot Talent is the thing I knew an actor—who read his parts by heart, syllable by syllable—but he played heroes in a way that why—the whole theater would rock with ecstasy!

*Satine* Bubnoff, give me five kopecks

*Bubnoff* I only have two—

*The Actor* I say—talent, that's what you need to play heroes And talent is nothing but faith in yourself, in your own powers—

*Satine* Give me five kopecks and I'll have faith that you're a hero, a crocodile, or a police inspector—Kleshtch, give me five kopecks

*Kleshtch* Go to hell! All of you!

*Satine* What are you cursing for? I know you haven't a kopeck in the world!

*Anna* Andrei Mitritch—I'm suffocating—I can't breathe—

*Kleshtch* What shall I do?

*Bubnoff* Open the door into the hall

*Kleshtch* All right You're sitting on the bunk, I on the floor You change places with me, and I'll let you open the door I have a cold as it is

*Bubnoff* [unconcernedly] I don't care if you open the door—it's your wife who's asking—

*Kleshtch* [morosely] I don't care who's asking—

*Satine* My head buzzes—ah—why do people have to hit each other over the heads?

*Bubnoff* They don't only hit you over the head, but over the rest of the body as well [Rises] I must go and buy some thread—our bosses are late today—seems as if they've croaked [Exit]

[ANNA coughs, SATINE is lying down motionless, his hands folded behind his head]

*The Actor* [looks about him morosely, then goes to ANNA] Feeling bad, eh?

*Anna* I'm choking—

*The Actor* If you wish, I'll take you into the hallway Get up, then, come! [He helps her to rise, wraps some sort of a rag about her shoulders, and supports her toward the hall] It isn't easy I'm sick myself—poisoned with alcohol

[KOSTILYOFF appears in the doorway]

*Kostilyoff* Going for a stroll? What a nice couple—the gallant cavalier and the lady fair!

*The Actor.* Step aside, you—don't you see that we're invalids?

*Kostilyoff* Pass on, please! [*Hums a religious tune, glances about him suspiciously, and bends his head to the left as if listening to what is happening in PEPEL'S room* KLESHTCH is jangling his keys and scraping away with his file, and looks askance at the other] Filing?

*Kleshtch* What?

*Kostilyoff* I say, are you filing? [*Pause*] What did I want to ask? [*Quick and low*] Hasn't my wife been here?

*Kleshtch* I didn't see her

*Kostilyoff* [*Carefully moving toward PEPEL'S room*] You take up a whole lot of room for your two rubles a month. The bed—and your bench—yes—you take up five rubles' worth of space, so help me God! I'll have to put another half ruble to your rent—

*Kleshtch* You'll put a noose around my neck and choke me—you'll croak soon enough, and still all you think of is half rubles—

*Kostilyoff* Why should I choke you? What would be the use? God be with you—live and prosper! But I'll have to raise you half a ruble—I'll buy oil for the ikon lamp, and my offering will atone for my sins, and for yours as well. You don't think much of your sins—not much! Oh, Andrushka, you're a wicked man! Your wife is dying because of your wickedness—no one loves you, no one respects you—your work is squeaky, jarring on every one.

*Kleshtch* [*shouts*] What do you come here for—just to annoy me?

[SATINE grunts loudly]

*Kostilyoff* [*with a start*] God, what a noise!

[*The Actor enters*]

*The Actor* I've put her down in the hall and wrapped her up.

*Kostilyoff* You're a kindly fellow. That's good. Some day you'll be rewarded for it.

*The Actor* When?

*Kostilyoff* In the Beyond, little brother—there all our deeds will be reckoned up.

*The Actor* Suppose you reward me right now?

*Kostilyoff* How can I do that?

*The Actor* Wipe out half my debt.

*Kostilyoff* He-ho! You're always jesting, darling—always poking fun—can kindness of heart be repaid with gold? Kindness—it's above all other qualities. But your debt to me—remains a debt. And so you'll have to pay me back. You ought to be kind to me, an old man, without seeking for reward!

*The Actor* You're a swindler, old man!

[*Goes into kitchen*]

[KLESHTCH rises and goes into the hall]

*Kostilyoff* [*to SATINE*] See that squeaker—? He ran away—he doesn't like me!

*Satine* Does anybody like you besides the Devil?

*Kostilyoff* [*laughing*] Oh—you're so quarrelsome! But I like you all—I understand you all, my unfortunate downtrodden, useless brethren. [*Suddenly, rapidly*] Is Vaska home?

*Satine* See for yourself—

*Kostilyoff* [*goes to the door and knocks*] Vaska!

[*The Actor appears at the kitchen door, chewing something*]

*Pepel* Who is it?

*Kostilyoff* It's I—I, Vaska!

*Pepel* What do you want?

*Kostilyoff* [*stepping aside*] Open!

*Satine* [*without looking at KOSTILYOFF*] He'll open—and she's there—

[*The Actor makes a grimace*]

*Kostilyoff* [*in a low, anxious tone*] Eh? Who's there? What?

*Satine* Speaking to me?

*Kostilyoff* What did you say?

*Satine* Oh—nothing—I was just talking to myself—

*Kostilyoff* Take care, brother. Don't carry your joking too far! [*Knocks loudly at door*] Vassily!

*Pepel* [*opening door*]. Well? What are you disturbing me for?

*Kostilyoff* [*peering into room*] I—you see—

*Pepel* Did you bring the money?

*Kostilyoff* I've something to tell you—

*Pepel* Did you bring the money?

*Kostilyoff* What money? Wait—

*Pepel* Why—the seven rubles for the watch—well?

*Kostilyoff* What watch, Vaska? Oh, you—

*Pepel* Look here. Yesterday, before witnesses, I sold you a watch for ten rubles,

you gave me three—now let me have the other seven. What are you blinking for? You hang around here—you disturb people—and don't seem to know yourself what you're after.

*Kostilyoff* Sh-sh! Don't be angry, Vaska. The watch—it is—

*Satine* Stolen!

*Kostilyoff* [sternly] I do not accept stolen goods—how can you imagine—

*Pepel* [taking him by the shoulder]. What did you disturb me for? What do you want?

*Kostilyoff* I don't want—anything. I'll go—if you're in such a state—

*Pepel* Be off, and bring the money!

*Kostilyoff* What ruffians! I—I—

[Exit]

*The Actor* What a farce!

*Satine* That's fine—I like it.

*Pepel* What did he come here for?

*Satine* [laughing] Don't you understand? He's looking for his wife. Why don't you beat him up once and for all, Vaska?

*Pepel* Why should I let such trash interfere with my life?

*Satine* Show some brains! And then you can marry Vassilisa—and become our boss—

*Pepel* Heavenly bliss! And you'd smash up my household and, because I'm a soft-hearted fool, you'll drink up everything I possess. [Sits on a bunk] Old devil—woke me up—I was having such a pleasant dream. I dreamed I was fishing—and I caught an enormous trout—such a trout as you only see in dreams! I was playing him—and I was so afraid the line would snap. I had just got out the gaff—and I thought to myself—in a moment—

*Satine* It wasn't a trout, it was Vassilisa—

*The Actor* He caught Vassilisa a long time ago.

*Pepel* [angrily] You can all go to the devil—and Vassilisa with you—

[KLESHTCH comes from the hall]

*Kleshtch* Devilishly cold!

*The Actor* Why didn't you bring Anna back? She'll freeze, out there—

*Kleshtch* Natasha took her into the kitchen—

*The Actor*. The old man will kick her out—

*Kleshtch* [sitting down to his work] Well—Natasha will bring her in here—

*Satine* Vassily—give me five kopecks!

*The Actor* [to SATINE] Oh, you—always five kopecks—Vassya—give us twenty kopecks—

*Pepel* I'd better give it to them now before they ask for a ruble. Here you are!

*Satine*. Gibraltar! There are no kinder people in the world than thieves!

*Kleshtch* [morosely] They earn their money easily—they don't work—

*Satine* Many earn it easily, but not many part with it so easily. Work? Make work pleasant—and maybe I'll work too. Yes—maybe. When work's a pleasure, life's, too. When it's toil, then life is a drudge. [To the Actor] You, Sardanapalus! Come on!

*The Actor*. Let's go, Nebuchadnezzar! I'll get as drunk as forty thousand toppers!

[They leave]

*Pepel* [yawning] Well, how's your wife?

*Kleshtch* It seems as if soon—[Pause]

*Pepel* Now I look at you—seems to me all that filing and scraping of yours is useless.

*Kleshtch* Well—what else can I do?

*Pepel* Nothing.

*Kleshtch* How can I live?

*Pepel* People manage, somehow.

*Kleshtch* Them? Call them people? Muck and dregs—that's what they are! I'm a workman—I'm ashamed even to look at them. I've slaved since I was a child.

D'you think I shan't be able to tear myself away from here? I'll crawl out of here, even if I have to leave my skin behind—but crawl out I will! Just wait my wife'll die. I've lived here six months, and it seems like six years.

*Pepel* Nobody here's any worse off than you. Say what you like.

*Kleshtch* No worse is right. They've neither honor nor conscience.

*Pepel* [indifferently] What good does it do—honor or conscience? Can you get them on their feet instead of on their uppers—through honor and conscience? Honor and conscience are needed only by those who have power and energy.

*Bubnoff* [coming back] Oh—I'm frozen.

*Pepel* Bubnoff! Got a conscience?

*Bubnoff* What? A conscience?

*Pepel* Exactly!

*Bubnoff* What do I need a conscience for? I'm not rich

*Pepel* Just what I said honor and conscience are for the rich—right! And Kleshtch is upbraiding us because we haven't any!

*Bubnoff* Why—did he want to borrow some of it?

*Pepel* No—he has plenty of his own

*Bubnoff* Oh—are you selling it? You won't sell much around here But if you had some old boxes, I'd buy them—on credit

*Pepel* [*didactically*] You're a jackass, Andrushka! On the subject of conscience you ought to hear Satine—or the Baron

*Kleshtch* I've nothing to talk to them about!

*Pepel* They have more brains than you—even if they're drunkards

*Bubnoff* He who can be drunk and wise at the same time is doubly blessed

*Pepel* Satine says every man expects his neighbor to have a conscience, but—you see—it isn't to any one's advantage to have one—that's a fact

[*NATASHA enters, followed by LUKA who carries a stick in his hand, a bundle on his back, a kettle and a teapot slung from his belt*]

*Luka* How are you, honest folks?

*Pepel* [*twisting his mustache*] Aha—Natasha!

*Bubnoff* [*to LUKA*] I was honest—up to spring before last

*Natasha* Here's a new lodger

*Luka* Oh, it's all the same to me Crooks—I don't mind them, either For my part there's no bad flea—they're all black—and they all jump—Well, dearie, show me where I can stow myself

*Natasha* [*pointing to kitchen door*] Go in there, grand-dad

*Luka* Thanks, girlie! One place is like another—as long as an old fellow keeps warm, he keeps happy

*Pepel* What an amusing old codger you brought in, Natasha!

*Natasha* A hanged sight more interesting than you! Andrei, your wife's in the kitchen with us—come and fetch her after a while

*Kleshtch* All right—I will

*Natasha* And be a little more kind to her—you know she won't last much longer

*Kleshtch* I know

*Natasha*. Knowing won't do any good—it's terrible—dying—don't you understand?

*Pepel* Well—look at me—I'm not afraid

*Natasha* Oh—you're a wonder, aren't you?

*Bubnoff* [*whistling*] Oh—this thread's rotten . . .

*Pepel* Honestly, I'm not afraid! I'm ready to die right now Knife me to the heart—and I'll die without making a sound even gladly—from such a pure hand

*Natasha* [*going out*] Spin that yarn for some one else!

*Bubnoff* Oh—that thread is rotten—rotten—

*Natasha* [*at hallway door*] Don't forget your wife, Andrei!

*Kleshtch* All right

*Pepel* She's a wonderful girl!

*Bubnoff* She's all right

*Pepel* What makes her so curt with me? Anyway—she'll come to no good here

*Bubnoff* Through you—sure!

*Pepel* Why through me? I feel sorry for her

*Bubnoff* As the wolf for the lamb!

*Pepel* You lie! I feel very sorry for her very very sorry! She has a tough life here—I can see that

*Kleshtch* Just wait till Vassilisa catches you talking to her!

*Bubnoff* Vassilisa? She won't give up so easily what belongs to her—she's a cruel woman!

*Pepel* [*stretching himself on the bunk*] You two prophets can go to hell!

*Kleshtch* Just wait—you'll see!

*Luka* [*singing in the kitchen*] "In the dark of the night the way is black"

*Kleshtch* Another one who yelps!

*Pepel* It's dreary! Why do I feel so dreary? You live—and everything seems all right But suddenly a cold chill goes through you—and then everything gets dreary

*Bubnoff* Dreary? Hm-hm—

*Pepel* Yes—yes—

*Luka* [*sings*] "The way is black"

*Pepel* Old fellow! Hey there!

*Luka* [*looking from kitchen door*] You call me?

*Pepel* Yes Don't sing!

*Luka* [*coming in*] You don't like it?

*Pepel* When people sing well I like it—

*Luka* In other words—I don't sing well?

*Pepel* Evidently!

*Luka* Well, well—and I thought I sang well. That's always the way a man imagines there's one thing he can do well, and suddenly he finds out that other people don't think so.

*Pepel* [laughs] That's right.

*Bubnoff* First you say you feel dreary—and then you laugh!

*Pepel* None of your business, raven!

*Luka* Who do they say feels dreary?

*Pepel* I do.

[*The Baron enters*]

*Luka* Well, well—out there in the kitchen there's a girl reading and crying! That's so! Her eyes are wet with tears. I say to her "What's the matter, darling?" And she says "It's so sad!" "What's so sad?" say I. "The book!" says she—And that's how people spend their time. Just because they're bored.

*The Baron* She's a fool!

*Pepel* Have you had tea, Baron?

*The Baron* Yes. Go on!

*Pepel* Well—want me to open a bottle?

*The Baron* Of course. Go on!

*Pepel* Drop on all fours, and bark like a dog!

*The Baron* Fool! What's the matter with you? Are you drunk?

*Pepel* Go on—bark a little! It'll amuse me. You're an aristocrat. You didn't even consider us human formerly, did you?

*The Baron* Go on!

*Pepel* Well—and now I am making you bark like a dog—and you will bark, won't you?

*The Baron* All right. I will. You jack-ass! What pleasure can you derive from it, since I myself know that I have sunk almost lower than you. You should have made me drop on all fours in the days when I was still above you.

*Bubnoff* That's right.

*Luka* I say so, too!

*Bubnoff* What's over, is over. Remain only trivialities. We know no class distinctions here. We've shed all pride and self-respect. Blood and bone—man—just plain man—that's what we are!

*Luka* In other words, we're all equal. And you, friend, were you really a Baron?

*The Baron* Who are you? A ghost?

*Luka* [laughing] I've seen counts and princes in my day—this is the first time I meet a baron—and one who's decaying—at that!

*Pepel* [laughing] Baron, I blush for you!

*The Baron* It's time you knew better, Vassily.

*Luka* Hey-hey—I look at you, brothers—the life you're leading.

*Bubnoff* Such a life! As soon as the sun rises, our voices rise, too—in quarrels!

*The Baron* We've all seen better days—yes! I used to wake up in the morning and drink my coffee in bed—coffee—with cream! Yes—

*Luka* And yet we're all human beings. Pretend all you want to, put on all the airs you wish, but man you were born and man you must die. And as I watch I see that the wiser people get, the busier they get—and though from bad to worse, they still strive to improve—stubbornly—

*The Baron* Who are you, old fellow? Where do you come from?

*Luka* I?

*The Baron* Are you a tramp?

*Luka* We're all of us tramps—why—I've heard said that the very earth we walk on is nothing but a tramp in the universe.

*The Baron* [severely] Perhaps. But have you a passport?

*Luka* [after a short pause] And what are you—a police inspector?

*Pepel* [delighted] You scored, old fellow! Well, Barosha, you got it this time!

*Bubnoff* Yes—our little aristocrat got his!

*The Baron* [embarrassed] What's the matter? I was only joking, old man. Why, brother, I haven't a passport, either.

*Bubnoff* You lie!

*The Baron* Oh—well—I have some sort of papers—but they have no value—

*Luka* They're papers just the same—and no papers are any good—

*Pepel* Baron—come on to the saloon with me—

*The Baron* I'm ready. Good-bye, old man—you old scamp—

*Luka* Maybe I am one, brother—

*Pepel* [near doorway] Come on—come on!

[*Leaves, Baron following him quickly*]

*Luka* Was he really once a Baron?

*Bubnoff* Who knows? A gentleman—?

Yes That much he's even now Occasionally it sticks out He never got rid of the habit

*Luka* Nobility is like small-pox A man may get over it—but it leaves marks

*Bubnoff* He's all right all the same—occasionally he kicks—as he did about your passport

[*ALYOSHA comes in, slightly drunk, with a concertina in his hand, whistling*]

*Alyoshka* Hey there, lodgers!

*Bubnoff* What are you yelling for?

*Alyoshka* Excuse me—I beg your pardon! I'm a well-bred man—

*Bubnoff* On a spree again?

*Alyoshka* Right you are! A moment ago Medyakín, the precinct captain, threw me out of the police station and said "Look here—I don't want as much as a smell of you to stay in the streets—d'you hear?" I'm a man of principles, and the boss croaks at me—and what's a boss anyway—pah!—it's all bosh—the boss is a drunkard I don't make any demands on life I want nothing—that's all Offer me one ruble, offer me twenty—it doesn't affect me [*NASTYA comes from the kitchen*] Offer me a million—I won't take it! And to think that I, a respectable man, should be ordered about by a pal of mine—and he a drunkard! I won't have it—I won't!

[*NASTYA stands in the doorway, shaking her head at ALYOSHA*]

*Luka* [*good-naturedly*] Well, boy, you're a bit confused—

*Bubnoff* Aren't men fools!

*Alyoshka* [*stretches out on the floor*] Here, eat me up alive—and I don't want anything I'm a desperate man Show me one better! Why am I worse than others? There! Medyakín said "If you show yourself on the streets I smash your face!" And yet I shall go out—I'll go—and stretch out in the middle of the street—let them choke me—I don't want a thing!

*Nastya* Poor fellow—only a boy—and he's already putting on such airs—

*Alyoshka* [*kneeling before her*] Lady! Mademoiselle! Parlez français—? *Pris courant?* I'm on a spree—

*Nastya* [*in a loud whisper*] Vassilisa!

*Vassilisa* [*opens door quickly, to ALYOSHA*] You here again?

*Alyoshka* How do you do—? Come in—you're welcome—

*Vassilisa* I told you, young puppy, that not a shadow of you should stick around here—and you're back—eh?

*Alyoshka* Vassilisa Karpovna shall I tune up a funeral march for you?

*Vassilisa* [*seizing him by the shoulders*] Get out!

*Alyoshka* [*moving towards the door*] Wait—you can't put me out this way! I learned this funeral march a little while ago! It's refreshing music wait—you can't put me out like that!

*Vassilisa* I'll show whether I can or not I'll rouse the whole street against you—you foul-mouthed creature—you're too young to bark about me—

*Alyoshka* [*running out*] All right—I'll go—

*Vassilisa* Look out—I'll get you yet!

*Alyoshka* [*opens the door and shouts*] Vassilisa Karpovna—I'm not afraid of you—

[*Hides*]

[*LUKA laughs*]

*Vassilisa* Who are you?

*Luka* A passer-by—a traveler

*Vassilisa* Stopping for the night or going to stay here?

*Luka* I'll see

*Vassilisa* Have you a passport?

*Luka* Yes

*Vassilisa* Give it to me

*Luka* I'll bring it over to your house—

*Vassilisa* Call yourself a traveler? If you'd say a tramp—that would be nearer the truth—

*Luka* [*sighing*] You're not very kindly, mother!

[*VASSILISA goes to door that leads to PEPEL'S room ALYOSHA pokes his head through the kitchen door*]

*Alyoshka* Has she left?

*Vassilisa* [*turning around*] Are you still here?

[*ALYOSHA disappears, whistling NASTYA and LUKA laugh*]

*Bubnoff* [*to VASSILISA*] He isn't here—

*Vassilisa* Who?

*Bubnoff* Vaska

*Vassilisa* Did I ask you about him?

*Bubnoff* I noticed you were looking around—

*Vassilisa* I am looking to see if things are in order, you see? Why aren't the floors swept yet? How often did I give orders to keep the house clean?

*Bubnoff* It's the actor's turn to sweep—



*Vassilisa* Never mind whose turn it is! If the health inspector comes and fines me, I'll throw out the lot of you—

*Bubnoff* [*calmly*] Then how are you going to earn your living?

*Vassilisa* I don't want a speck of dirt! [*Goes to kitchen, to NASTYA*] What are you hanging round here for? Why's your face all swollen up? Why are you standing there like a dummy? Go on—sweep the floor! Did you see Natalia? Was she here?

*Nastya* I don't know—I haven't seen her

*Vassilisa* Bubnoff! Was my sister here?

*Bubnoff* She brought him along

*Vassilisa* That one—was he home?

*Bubnoff* Vassily? Yes—Natalia was here talking to Kleshtch—

*Vassilisa* I'm not asking you whom she talked to. Dirt everywhere—filth—oh, you swine! Mop it all up—do you hear?

[*Exit rapidly*]

*Bubnoff* What a savage beast she is!

*Luka* She's a lady that means business!

*Nastya* You grow to be an animal, leading such a life—any human being tied to such a husband as hers

*Bubnoff* Well—that tie isn't worrying her any—

*Luka* Does she always have these fits?

*Bubnoff* Always. You see, she came to find her lover—but he isn't home—

*Luka* I guess she was hurt. Oh-ho! Everybody is trying to be boss—and is threatening everybody else with all kinds of punishment—and still there's no order in life and no cleanliness—

*Bubnoff* All the world likes order—but some people's brains aren't fit for it. All the same—the room should be swept—*Nastya*—you ought to get busy!

*Nastya* Oh, certainly? Anything else? Think I'm your servant? [*Silence*] I'm going to get drunk to-night—dead-drunk!

*Bubnoff* Fine business!

*Luka* Why do you want to get drunk, girlie? A while ago you were crying—and now you say you'll get drunk—

*Nastya* [*defiantly*] I'll drink—then I cry again—that's all there's to it!

*Bubnoff* That's nothing!

*Luka* But for what reason—tell me! Every pimple has a cause! [*NASTYA remains silent, shaking her head*] Oh—you men—what's to become of you? All right—

I'll sweep the place. Where's your broom?

*Bubnoff* Behind the door—in the hall—  
[*LUKA goes into the hall*] *Nastinka*!

*Nastya* Yes?

*Bubnoff* Why did *Vassilisa* jump on *Alyoshka*?

*Nastya* He told her that *Vaska* was tired of her and was going to get rid of her—and that he's going to make up to *Natasha*—I'll go away from here—I'll find another lodging-house—

*Bubnoff* Why? Where?

*Nastya* I'm sick of this—I'm not wanted here!

*Bubnoff* [*calmly*] You're not wanted anywhere—and, anyway, all people on earth are superfluous—

[*NASTYA shakes her head. Rises and slowly, quietly, leaves the cellar. MIEDVIEDIEFF comes in. LUKA, with the broom, follows him*]

*Miedvedieff* I don't think I know you—

*Luka* How about the others—d'you know them all?

*Miedvedieff* I must know everybody in my precinct. But I don't know you.

*Luka* That's because, uncle, the whole world can't stow itself away in your precinct—some of it was bound to remain outside. [*Goes into kitchen*]

*Miedvedieff* [*crosses to BUBNOFF*] It's true—my precinct is rather small—yet it's worse than any of the very largest. Just now, before getting off duty, I had to bring *Alyoshka*, the shoemaker, to the station house. Just imagine—there he was, stretched right in the middle of the street, playing his concertina and yelping “I want nothing, nothing!” Horses going past all the time—and with all the traffic going on, he could easily have been run over—and so on! He's a wild youngster—so I just collared him—he likes to make mischief—

*Bubnoff* Coming to play checkers to-night?

*Miedvedieff* Yes—I'll come—how's *Vaska*?

*Bubnoff* Same as ever—

*Miedvedieff* Meaning—he's getting along—?

*Bubnoff* Why shouldn't he? He's able to get along all right.

*Miedvedieff* [*doubtfully*] Why shouldn't he? [*LUKA goes into hallway, carrying a*



*Paul*] M—yes—there's a lot of talk about Vaska. Haven't you heard?

*Bubnoff* I hear all sorts of gossip.

*Miedvedieff* There seems to have been some sort of talk concerning Vassilisa. Haven't you heard about it?

*Bubnoff* What?

*Miedvedieff* Oh—why—generally speaking. Perhaps you know—and lie. Everybody knows—[*Severely*] You mustn't lie, brother!

*Bubnoff* Why should I lie?

*Miedvedieff* That's right. Dogs! They say that Vaska and Vassilisa—but what's that to me? I'm not her father. I'm her uncle. Why should they ridicule me? [*KVASHNYA comes in*] What are people coming to? They laugh at everything. Aha—you here?

*Kvashnya* Well—my love-sick garrison—? *Bubnoff*! He came up to me again on the marketplace and started pestering me about marrying him.

*Bubnoff* Go to it! Why not? He has money and he's still a husky fellow.

*Miedvedieff* Me—? I should say so!

*Kvashnya* You ruffian! Don't you dare touch my sore spot! I've gone through it once already, darling. Marriage to a woman is just like jumping through a hole in the ice in winter. You do it once, and you remember it the rest of your life.

*Miedvedieff* Wait! There are different breeds of husbands.

*Kvashnya* But there's only one of me! When my beloved husband kicked the bucket, I spent the whole day all by my lonely—just bursting with joy. I sat and simply couldn't believe it was true.

*Miedvedieff* If your husband beat you without cause, you should have complained to the police.

*Kvashnya* I complained to God for eight years—and he didn't help.

*Miedvedieff* Nowadays the law forbids to beat your wife. All is very strict these days—there's law and order everywhere. You can't beat up people without due cause. If you beat them to maintain discipline—all right.

*Luka* [*comes in with ANNA*] Well—we finally managed to get here after all. Oh, you! Why do you, weak as you are, walk about alone? Where's your bunk?

*Anna* [*pointing*] Thank you, grand-dad

*Kvashnya* There—she's married—look at her!

*Luka* The little woman is in very bad shape. She was creeping along the hallway, clinging to the wall and moaning—why do you leave her by herself?

*Kvashnya* Oh, pure carelessness on our part, little father—forgive us! Her maid, it appears, went out for a walk.

*Luka* Go on—poke fun at me—but, all the same, how can you neglect a human being like that? No matter who or what, every human life has its worth.

*Miedvedieff* There should be supervision! Suppose she died suddenly—? That would cause a lot of bother. We must look after her!

*Luka* True, sergeant!

*Miedvedieff* Well—yes—though I'm not a sergeant—ah—yet!

*Luka* No! But you carry yourself most martially!

[*Noise of shuffling feet is heard in the hallway. Muffled cries.*]

*Miedvedieff* What now—a row?

*Bubnoff* Sounds like it?

*Kvashnya* I'll go and see.

*Miedvedieff* I'll go, too. It is my duty! Why separate people when they fight? They'll stop sooner or later of their own accord. One gets tired of fighting. Why not let them fight all they want to—freely? They wouldn't fight half as often—if they'd remember former beatings.

*Bubnoff* [*climbing down from his bunk*] Why don't you speak to your superiors about it?

*Kostilyoff* [*throws open the door and shouts*] Abram! Come quick—Vassilisa is killing Natasha—come quick.

[*KVASHNYA, MIEDVEDIEFF, and BUBNOFF rush into hallway, LUKA looks after them, shaking his head.*]

*Anna* Oh God—poor little Natasha.

*Luka* Who's fighting out there?

*Anna* Our landladies—they're sisters.

*Luka* [*crossing to ANNA*] Why?

*Anna* Oh—for no reason—except that they're both fat and healthy.

*Luka* What's your name?

*Anna* Anna. I look at you—you're like my father—my dear father—you're as gentle as he was—and as soft.

*Luka* Soft! Yes! They pounded me till I got soft! [*Laughs tremulously*]

## ACT TWO

*Same as Act One—Night*

On the bunks near the stove SATINE, the BARON, KRIVVOY ZOB, and the TARTAR play cards KLESHTCH and the ACTOR watch them BUBNOFF, on his bunk, is playing checkers with MIEDVEDIEFF LUKA sits on a stool by ANNA'S bedside The place is lit by two lamps, one on the wall near the card players, the other is on BUBNOFF'S bunk

*The Tartar* I'll play one more game—then I'll stop

*Bubnoff* Zob! Sing! [*He sings*]

"The sun rises and sets "

*Zob* [*joining in*]

"But my prison is dark, dark "

*The Tartar* [*to SATINE*] Shuffle the cards—and shuffle them well We know your kind—

*Zob and Bubnoff* [*together*]

"Day and night the wardens

Watch beneath my window "

*Anna* Blows—insults—I've had nothing but that all my life long .

*Luka* Don't worry, little mother!

*Miedvedieff* Look where you're moving!

*Bubnoff* Oh, yes—that's right

*The Tartar* [*threatening SATINE with his fist*] You're trying to palm a card? I've seen you—you scoundrel

*Zob* Stop it, Hassan! They'll skin us anyway come on, Bubnoff!

*Anna* I can't remember a single day when I didn't go hungry I've been afraid, waking, eating, and sleeping all my life I've trembled—afraid I wouldn't get another bite all my life I've been in rags—all through my wretched life—and why ?

*Luka* Yes, yes, child—you're tired—never you mind!

*The Actor* [*to Zob*] Play the Jack—the Jack, devil take you!

*The Baron* And we play the King!

*Kleshtch* They always win

*Satine* Such is our habit

*Miedvedieff* I have the Queen!

*Bubnoff* And so have I!

*Anna* I'm dying

*Kleshtch* Look, look! Prince, throw up the game—throw it up, I tell you!

*The Actor* Can't he play without your assistance?

*The Baron* Look out, Andrushka, or I'll beat the life out of you!

*The Tartar* Deal once more—the pitcher went after water—and got broke—and so did I!

[*KLESHTCH shakes his head and crosses to BUBNOFF*]

*Anna* I keep on thinking—is it possible that I'll suffer in the other world as I did in this—is it possible? There, too?

*Luka* Nothing of the sort! Don't you disturb yourself! You'll rest there be patient We all suffer, dear, each in our own way . . . [*Rises and goes quickly into kitchen*]

*Bubnoff* [*sings*]

"Watch as long as you please . . ."

*Zob* "I shan't run away "

*Both* [*together*]

"I long to be free, free—

Alas! I cannot break my chains "

*The Tartar* [*yells*] That card was up his sleeve!

*The Baron* [*embarrassed*] Do you want me to shove it up your nose?

*The Actor* [*emphatically*] Prince! You're mistaken—nobody—ever

*The Tartar* I saw it! You cheat! I won't play!

*Satine* [*gathering up the cards*] Leave us alone, Hassan you knew right along that we're cheats—why did you play with us?

*The Baron*. He lost forty kopecks and he yelps as if he had lost a fortune! And a Prince at that!

*The Tartar* [*excitedly*] Then play honest!

*Satine* What for?

*The Tartar* What do you mean "what for"?

*Satine* Exactly What for?

*The Tartar* Don't you know?

*Satine* I don't Do you?

[*The TARTAR splits out, furiously, the others laugh at him*]

*Zob* [*good-naturedly*] You're a funny fellow, Hassan! Try to understand this! If they should begin to live honestly, they'd die of starvation inside of three days

*The Tartar* That's none of my business You must live honestly!

*Zob* They did you brown! Come and let's have tea [*Sings*]

"O my chains, my heavy chains "

*Bubnoff [sings]*

"You're my steely, clanking wardens . . ."

*Zob* Come on, Hassanka! [*Leaves the room, singing*]

"I cannot tear you, cannot break you . . ."

[*The TARTAR shakes his fist threateningly at the BARON, and follows the other out of the room*]

*Satine [to BARON, laughing]* Well, Your Imperial Highness, you've again sat down magnificently in a mud puddle! You've learned a lot—but you're an ignoramus when it comes to palming a card

*The Baron [spreading his hands]*. The Devil knows how it happened . . .

*The Actor* You're not gifted—you've no faith in yourself—and without that you can never accomplish anything . . .

*Miedviedieff* I've one Queen—and you've two—oh, well . . .

*Bubnoff* One's enough if she has brains—play!

*Kleshtch* You lost, Abram Ivanovitch?

*Miedviedieff* None of your business—see? Shut up!

*Satine* I've won fifty-three kopecks

*The Actor* Give me three of them though, what'll I do with them?

*Luka [coming from kitchen]* Well—the Tartar was fleeced all right, eh? Going to have some vodka?

*The Baron* Come with us

*Satine* I wonder what you'll be like when you're drunk

*Luka* Same as when I'm sober

*The Actor* Come on, old man—I'll recite verses for you

*Luka* What?

*The Actor* Verses. Don't you understand?

*Luka* Verses? And what do I want with verses?

*The Actor* Sometimes they're funny—sometimes sad

*Satine* Well, poet, are you coming?  
[*Exit with the BARON*]

*The Actor*. I'm coming I'll join you For instance, old man, here's a bit of verse—I forget how it begins—I forget  
[*Brushes his hand across his forehead*]

*Bubnoff* There! Your Queen is lost—go on, play!

*Miedviedieff* I made the wrong move

*The Actor* Formerly, before my organ-ism was poisoned with alcohol, old man, I had a good memory But now it's all over

with me, brother I used to declaim these verses with tremendous success—thunders of applause . . . you have no idea what applause means . . . it goes to your head like vodka! I'd step out on the stage—stand this way—[*Strikes a pose*—I'd stand there and . . . [*Pause*] I can't remember a word—I can't remember! My favorite verses— isn't it ghastly, old man?

*Luka* Yes—is there anything worse than forgetting what you loved? Your very soul is in the thing you love!

*The Actor* I've drunk my soul away, old man—brother, I'm lost . . . and why? Because I had no faith . . . I'm done with

*Luka* Well—then—cure yourself! Nowadays they have a cure for drunkards They treat you free of charge, brother There's a hospital for drunkards—where they're treated for nothing They've owned up, you see, that even a drunkard is a human being, and they're only too glad to help him get well Well—then—go to it!

*The Actor [thoughtfully]* Where? Where is it?

*Luka* Oh—in some town or other what do they call it—? I'll tell you the name presently—only, in the meanwhile, get ready Don't drink so much! Take yourself in hand—and bear up! And then, when you're cured, you'll begin life all over again Sounds good, brother, doesn't it, to begin all over again? Well—make up your mind!

*The Actor [smiling]* All over again—from the very beginning—that's fine yes all over again . . . [*Laughs*] Well—then—I can, can't I?

*Luka* Why not? A human being can do anything—if he only makes up his mind

*The Actor [suddenly, as if coming out of a trance]*. You're a queer bird! See you anon! [*Whistles*] Old man—*au revoir!*

[*Exit*]

*Anna* Grand-dad!

*Luka* Yes, little mother?

*Anna* Talk to me

*Luka [close to her]* Come on—let's chat . . .

[*KLESHTCH, glancing around, silently walks over to his wife, looks at her, and makes queer gestures with his hands, as though he wanted to say something*]

*Luka* What is it, brother?

*Kleshtch [quietly]* Nothing

*[Crosses slowly to hallway door, stands on the threshold for a few seconds, and exits]*

*Luka [looking after him]* Hard on your man, isn't it?

*Anna* He doesn't concern me much.

*Luka* Did he beat you?

*Anna* Worse than that—it's he who's killed me—

*Bubnoff* My wife used to have a lover—the scoundrel—how clever he was at checkers!

*Miedvedieff* Hm-hm—

*Anna* Grand-dad! Talk to me, darling—I feel so sick

*Luka* Never mind—it's always like this before you die, little dove—never mind, dear! Just have faith! Once you're dead, you'll have peace—always. There's nothing to be afraid of—nothing. Quiet! Peace! Lie quietly! Death wipes out everything. Death is kindly. You die—and you rest—that's what they say. It is true, dear! Because—where can we find rest on this earth?

*[PEPEL enters. He is slightly drunk, dishevelled, and sullen. Sits down on bunk near door, and remains silent and motionless]*

*Anna* And how is it—there? More suffering?

*Luka* Nothing of the kind! No suffering! Trust me! Rest—nothing else! They'll lead you into God's presence, and they'll say "Dear God! Behold! Here is Anna, Thy servant!"

*Miedvedieff [sternly]* How do you know what they'll say up there? Oh, you

*[PEPEL, on hearing MIEDVEDIEFF'S voice, raises his head and listens]*

*Luka* Apparently I do know, Mr Sergeant!

*Miedvedieff [conciliatory]* Yes—it's your own affair—though I'm not exactly a sergeant—yet—

*Bubnoff* I jump two!

*Miedvedieff* Damn—play!

*Luka* And the Lord will look at you gently and tenderly and He'll say "I know this Anna!" Then He'll say "Take Anna into Paradise. Let her have peace. I know Her life on earth was hard. She is very weary. Let Anna rest in peace!"

*Anna [choking]* Grandfather—if it were

only so—if there were only rest and peace

*Luka* There won't be anything else! Trust me! Die in joy and not in grief. Death is to us like a mother to small children

*Anna* But—perhaps—perhaps I get well ?

*Luka [laughing]* Why? Just to suffer more?

*Anna* But—just to live a little longer just a little longer! Since there'll be no suffering hereafter, I could bear it a little longer down here

*Luka* There'll be nothing in the hereafter but only

*Pepel [rising]* Maybe yes—maybe no!

*Anna [frightened]* Oh—God!

*Luka* Hey—Adonis!

*Miedvedieff* Who's that yelping?

*Pepel [crossing over to him]* I! What of it?

*Miedvedieff* You yelp needlessly—that's what! People ought to have some dignity!

*Pepel* Block-head! And that's an uncle for you—ho-ho!

*Luka [to PEPEL, in an undertone]* Look here—don't shout—this woman's dying—her lips are already grey—don't disturb her!

*Pepel* I've respect for you, grand-dad. You're all right, you are! You lie well, and you spin pleasant yarns. Go on lying, brother—there's little fun in this world

*Bubnoff* Is the woman really dying?

*Luka* You think I'm joking?

*Bubnoff* That means she'll stop coughing. Her cough was very disturbing. I jump two!

*Miedvedieff* I'd like to murder you!

*Pepel* Abramka!

*Miedvedieff* I'm not Abramka to you!

*Pepel* Abrashka! Is Natasha ill?

*Miedvedieff* None of your business!

*Pepel* Come—tell me! Did Vassilisa beat her up very badly?

*Miedvedieff* That's none of your business, either! It's a family affair! Who are you anyway?

*Pepel* Whoever I am, you'll never see Natasha again if I choose!

*Miedvedieff [throwing up the game]* What's that? Who are you alluding to? My niece by any chance? You thief!

*Pepel* A thief whom you were never able to catch!

*Miedvedieff* Wait—I'll catch you yet—you'll see—sooner than you think!

*Pepel* If you catch me, God help your whole nest! Do you think I'll keep quiet before the examining magistrate? Every wolf howls! They'll ask me "Who made you steal and showed you where?" "Mishka Kostilyoff and his wife!" "Who was your fence?" "Mishka Kostilyoff and his wife!"

*Miedvedieff* You lie! No one will believe you!

*Pepel* They'll believe me all right—because it's the truth! And I'll drag you into it, too. Ha! I'll run the lot of you—devils—just watch!

*Miedvedieff* [*confused*]. You lie! You lie! And what harm did I do to you, you mad dog?

*Pepel*. And what good did you ever do me?

*Luka* That's right!

*Miedvedieff* [*to LUKA*] Well—what are you croaking about? Is it any of your business? This is a family matter!

*Bubnoff* [*to LUKA*] Leave them alone! What do we care if they twist each other's tails?

*Luka* [*peacefully*] I meant no harm. All I said was that if a man isn't good to you, then he's acting wrong.

*Miedvedieff* [*uncomprehending*] Now then—we all of us here know each other—but you—who are you?

[*Frowns and exits*]

*Luka* The cavalier is peeved! Oh-ho, brothers, I see your affairs are a bit tangled up!

*Pepel* He'll run to complain about us to Vassilisa.

*Bubnoff* You're a fool, Vassily. You're very bold these days, aren't you? Watch out! It's all right to be bold when you go gathering mushrooms, but what good is it here? They'll break your neck before you know it!

*Pepel* Well—not as fast as all that! You don't catch us Yaroslavl boys napping! If it's going to be war, we'll fight.

*Luka* Look here, boy, you really ought to go away from here—

*Pepel* Where? Please tell me!

*Luka* Go to Siberia!

*Pepel* If I go to Siberia, it'll be at the Tsar's expense!

*Luka* Listen! You go just the same!

You can make your own way there. They need your kind out there.

*Pepel* My way is clear. My father spent all his life in prison, and I inherited the trait. Even when I was a small child, they called me thief—thief's son.

*Luka* But Siberia is a fine country—a land of gold. Any one who has health and strength and brains can live there like a cucumber in a hothouse.

*Pepel* Old man, why do you always tell lies?

*Luka* What?

*Pepel* Are you deaf? I ask—why do you always lie?

*Luka* What do I lie about?

*Pepel* About everything. According to you, life's wonderful everywhere—but you lie why?

*Luka* Try to believe me. Go and see for yourself. And some day you'll thank me for it. What are you hanging round here for? And, besides, why is truth so important to you? Just think! Truth may spell death to you!

*Pepel* It's all one to me! If that—let it be that!

*Luka* Oh—what a madman! Why should you kill yourself?

*Bubnoff* What are you two jawing about, anyway? I don't understand. What kind of truth do you want, Vaska? And what for? You know the truth about yourself—and so does everybody else.

*Pepel* Just a moment! Don't crow! Let him tell me! Listen, old man! Is there a God?

[*LUKA smiles silently*]

*Bubnoff* People just drift along—like shavings on a stream. When a house is built—the shavings are thrown away!

*Pepel* Well? Is there a God? Tell me.

*Luka* [*in a low voice*] If you have faith, there is, if you haven't, there isn't whatever you believe in, exists.

[*PEPEL looks at LUKA in staring surprise*]

*Bubnoff* I'm going to have tea—come on over to the restaurant!

*Luka* [*to PEPEL*] What are you staring at?

*Pepel* Oh—just because! Wait now—you mean to say

*Bubnoff* Well—I'm off.

[*Goes to door and runs into VASSILISA*]

*Pepel* So—you

Vassilisa [to BUBNOFF] Is Nastasya home?

Bubnoff No [Exit]

Pepel Oh—you've come—?

Vassilisa [crossing to ANNA] Is she alive yet?

Luka Don't disturb her!

Vassilisa What are you loitering around here for?

Luka I'll go—if you want me to

Vassilisa [turning towards PEPPEL'S room]

Vassyl! I've some business with you

[LUKA goes to hallway door, opens it, and shuts it loudly, then warily climbs into a bunk, and from there to the top of the stove]

Vassilisa [calling from PIERL'S room]. Vaska—come here!

Pepel I won't come—I don't want to

Vassilisa Why? What are you angry about?

Pepel I'm sick of the whole thing

Vassilisa Sick of me, too?

Pepel Yes! Of you, too!

[VASSILISA draws her shawl about her, pressing her hands over her breast. Crosses to ANNA, looks carefully through the bed curtains, and returns to PEPPEL]

Well—out with it!

Vassilisa What do you want me to say? I can't force you to be loving, and I'm not the sort to beg for kindness. Thank you for telling me the truth

Pepel What truth?

Vassilisa That you're sick of me—or isn't it the truth? [PEPEL looks at her silently. She turns to him] What are you staring at? Don't you recognize me?

Pepel [sighing] You're beautiful, Vassilisa! [She puts her arm about his neck, but he shakes it off] But I never gave my heart to you. I've lived with you and all that—But I never really liked you

Vassilisa [quietly] That so? Well—?

Pepel What is there to talk about? Nothing. Go away from me!

Vassilisa Taken a fancy to some one else?

Pepel None of your business! Suppose I have—I wouldn't ask you to be my match-maker!

Vassilisa [significantly] That's too bad perhaps I might arrange a match

Pepel [suspiciously] Who with?

Vassilisa You know—why do you pretend? Vassyl—let me be frank [With lower voice] I won't deny it—you've offended me . . . it was like a bolt from the blue . . . you said you loved me—and then all of a sudden

Pepel It wasn't sudden at all. It's been a long time since I . . . woman, you've no soul! A woman must have a soul . . . we men are beasts—we must be taught—and you, what have you taught me—?

Vassilisa Never mind the past! I know—no man owns his own heart—you don't love me any longer . . . well and good, it can't be helped!

Pepel So that's over. We part peaceably, without a row—as it should be!

Vassilisa Just a moment! All the same, when I lived with you, I hoped you'd help me out of this swamp—I thought you'd free me from my husband and my uncle—from all this life—and perhaps, Vassyl, it wasn't you whom I loved—but my hope—do you understand I waited for you to drag me out of this mire

Pepel You aren't a nail—and I'm not a pair of pincers! I thought you had brains—you are so clever—so crafty . . .

Vassilisa [leaning closely towards him] Vassa—Let's help each other!

Pepel How?

Vassilisa [low and forcibly] My sister—I know you've fallen for her

Pepel And that's why you beat her up, like the beast you are! Look out, Vassilisa! Don't you touch her!

Vassilisa Wait. Don't get excited. We can do everything quietly and pleasantly. You want to marry her. I'll give you money . . . three hundred rubles—even more than

Pepel [moving away from her] Stop! What do you mean?

Vassilisa Rid me of my husband! Take that noose from around my neck

Pepel [whistling softly] So that's the way the land lies! You certainly planned it cleverly . . . in other words, the grave for the husband, the gallows for the lover, and as for yourself

Vassilisa Vassyl! Why the gallows? It doesn't have to be yourself—but one of your pals! And supposing it were yourself—who'd know? Natalia—just think—and you'll have money—you go away somewhere . . . you free me forever—and it'll be

very good for my sister to be away from me—the sight of her enrages me I get furious with her on account of you, and I can't control myself I tortured the girl—I beat her up—beat her up so that I myself cried with pity for her—but I'll beat her—and I'll go on beating her!

*Pepel* Beast! Bragging about your beastliness?

*Vassilisa* I'm not bragging—I speak the truth Think now, Vassa You've been to prison twice because of my husband—through his greed He clings to me like a bed-bug—he's been sucking the life out of me for the last four years—and what sort of a husband is he to me? He's forever abusing Natasha—calls her a beggar—he's just poison, plain poison, to every one . . .

*Pepel* You spin your yarn cleverly

*Vassilisa* Everything I say is true Only a fool could be as blind as you. . . .

[*KOSTILYOFF enters stealthily and comes forward noisily*]

*Pepel* [to *VASSILISA*] Oh—go away!

*Vassilisa* Think it over! [*Sees her husband*] What? You? Following me?

[*PEPEL leaps up and stares at KOSTILYOFF savagely*]

*Kostilyoff* It's I, I! So the two of you were here alone—you were—ah—conversing? [*Suddenly stamps his feet and screams*] *Vassilisa*—you bitch! You beggar! You damned hag! [*Frightened by his own screams which are met by silence and indifference on the part of the others*] Forgive me, O Lord . . . *Vassilisa*—again you've led me into the path of sin . . . I've been looking for you everywhere It's time to go to bed You forgot to fill the lamps—oh, you beggar! Swine! [*Shakes his trembling fist at her, while VASSILISA slowly goes to door, glancing at PEPEL over her shoulder*]

*Pepel* [to *KOSTILYOFF*] Go away—clear out of here—

*Kostilyoff* [yelling] What? I? The Boss? I get out? You thief!

*Pepel* [sullenly]. Go away, Mishka!

*Kostilyoff* Don't you dare—I—I'll show you

[*PEPEL seizes him by the collar and shakes him From the stove come loud noises and yawns PEPEL releases KOSTILYOFF who runs into the hallway, screaming*]

*Pepel* [jumping on a bunk] Who is it? Who's on the stove?

*Luka* [raising his head] Eh?

*Pepel* You?

*Luka* [undisturbed] I—I myself—oh, dear Jesus!

*Pepel* [*shuts hallway door, looks for the wooden closing bar, but can't find it*] The devil! Come down, old man!

*Luka* I'm climbing down—all right

*Pepel* [roughly] What did you climb on that stove for?

*Luka* Where was I to go?

*Pepel* Why—didn't you go out into the hall?

*Luka* The hall's too cold for an old fellow like myself, brother

*Pepel* You overheard?

*Luka* Yes—I did How could I help it? Am I deaf? Well, my boy, happiness is coming your way Real, good fortune I call it!

*Pepel* [suspiciously] What good fortune—?

*Luka* In so far as I was lying on the stove . . .

*Pepel* Why did you make all that noise?

*Luka* Because I was getting warm it was your good luck I thought if only the boy wouldn't make a mistake and choke the old man . . .

*Pepel* Yes—I might have done it . . . how terrible

*Luka* Small wonder! It isn't difficult to make a mistake of that sort

*Pepel* [smiling] What's the matter? Did you make the same sort of mistake once upon a time?

*Luka* Boy, listen to me Send that woman out of your life! Don't let her near you! Her husband—she'll get rid of him herself—and in a shrewder way than you could—yes! Don't you listen to that devil! Look at me! I am bald-headed—know why? Because of all these women Perhaps I knew more women than I had hair on the top of my head—but this *Vassilisa*—she's worse than the plague

*Pepel* I don't understand I don't know whether to thank you—or—well

*Luka* Don't say a word! You won't improve on what I said Listen take the one you like by the arm, and march out of here—get out of here—clean out

*Pepel* [sadly] I can't understand people



Who is kind and who isn't? It's all a mystery to me

*Luka* What's there to understand? There's all breeds of men they all live as their hearts tell them good to-day, bad to-morrow! But if you really care for that girl take her away from here and that's all there is to it Otherwise go away alone you're young—you're in no hurry for a wife

*Pepel* [taking him by the shoulder] Tell me! Why do you say all this?

*Luka* Wait Let me go I want a look at Anna she was coughing so terribly

[Goes to ANNA'S bed, pulls the curtains, looks, touches her PEPEL, thoughtfully and distraught, follows him with his eyes] Merciful Jesus Christ! Take into Thy keeping the soul of this woman Anna, new-comer amongst the blessed!

*Pepel* [softly] Is she dead?

[Without approaching, he stretches himself and looks at the bed]

*Luka* [gently] Her sufferings are over! Where's her husband?

*Pepel* In the saloon, most likely

*Luka* Well—he'll have to be told

*Pepel* [shuddering] I don't like corpses!

*Luka* [going to door] Why should you like them? It's the living who demand our love—the living

*Pepel* I'm coming with you

*Luka* Are you afraid?

*Pepel* I don't like it

[They go out quickly The stage is empty and silent for a few moments Behind the door is heard a dull, staccato, incomprehensible noise Then the Actor enters]

*The Actor* [stands at the open door, supporting himself against the jamb, and shouts] Hey, old man—where are you? I just remembered—listen [Takes two staggering steps forward and, striking a pose, recites]

"Good people! If the world cannot find A path to holy truth,  
Glory be to the madman who will enfold all humanity  
In a golden dream "

[NATASHA appears in the doorway behind the Actor]

Old man! [Recites]

"If to-morrow the sun were to forget  
To light our earth,  
To-morrow then some madman's thought

Would bathe the world in sunshine. "

*Natasha* [laughing] Scarecrow! You're drunk!

*The Actor* [turns to her] Oh—it's you? Where's the old man, the dear old man? Not a soul here, seems to me . *Natasha*, farewell—right—farewell!

*Natasha* [entering] Don't wish me farewell, before you've wished me how-d'you-do!

*The Actor* [barring her way] I am going Spring will come—and I'll be here no longer—

*Natasha* Wait a moment! Where do you propose going?

*The Actor* In search of a town—to be cured—And you, Ophelia, must go away! Take the veil! Just imagine—there's a hospital to cure—ah—organisms for drunkards—a wonderful hospital—built of marble—with marble floors light—clean—food—and all gratis! And a marble floor—yes! I'll find it—I'll get cured—and then I shall start life anew I'm on my way to regeneration, as King Lear said *Natasha*, my stage name is *Svertchikoff—Zavoloushski* do you realize how painful it is to lose one's name? Even dogs have their names

[NATASHA carefully passes the Actor, stops at ANNA'S bed and looks]

To be nameless—is not to exist!

*Natasha* Look, my dear—why—she's dead

*The Actor* [shakes his head] Impossible

*Natasha* [stepping back] So help me God—look

*Bubnoff* [appearing in doorway] What is there to look at?

*Natasha* Anna—she's dead!

*Bubnoff* That means—she's stopped coughing! [Goes to ANNA'S bed, looks, and returns to his bunk] We must tell *Kleshtch*—it's his business to know

*The Actor* I'll go—I'll say to him—she lost her name— [Exit]

*Natasha* [in centre of room] I, too—some day—I'll be found in the cellar—dead

*Bubnoff* [spreading out some rags on his bunk] What's that? What are you muttering?

*Natasha* Nothing much

*Bubnoff* Waiting for *Vaska*, eh? Take care—*Vassilisa*'ll break your head!



*Natasha* Isn't it the same who breaks it? I'd much rather he'd do it!

*Bubnoff* [*lying down*] Well—that's your own affair

*Natasha* It's best for her to be dead—yet it's a pity . oh, Lord—why do we live?

*Bubnoff* It's so with all . we're born, live, and die—and I'll die, too—and so'll you—what's there to be gloomy about?

[*Enter LUKA, the TARTAR, ZOB, and*

*KLESHTCH* *The latter comes after the others, slowly, shrunk up*]

*Natasha* Sh-sh! Anna!

*Zob* We've heard—God rest her soul

*The Tartar* [*to KLESHTCH*] We must take her out of here Out into the hall! This is no place for corpses—but for the living

*Kleshtch* [*quietly*] We'll take her out—

[*Everybody goes to the bed, KLESHTCH looks at his wife over the others' shoulders*]

*Zob* [*to the TARTAR*] You think she'll smell? I don't think she will—she dried up while she was still alive

*Natasha* God! If they'd only a little pity if only some one would say a kindly word—oh, you

*Luka* Don't be hurt, girl—never mind! Why and how should we pity the dead? We don't pity the living—we can't even pity our own selves—how can we?

*Bubnoff* [*yawning*] And, besides, when you're dead, no word will help you—when you're still alive, even sick, it may .

*The Tartar* [*stepping aside*] The police must be notified

*Zob* The police—must be done! *Kleshtch*! Did you notify the police?

*Kleshtch* No—she's got to be buried—and all I have is forty kopecks—

*Zob* Well—you'll have to borrow then—otherwise we'll take up a collection one'll give five kopecks, others as much as they can But the police must be notified at once—or they'll think you killed her or God knows what not

[*Crosses to the TARTAR'S bunk and prepares to lie down by his side*]

*Natasha* [*going to BUBNOFF'S bunk*] Now—I'll dream of her I always dream of the dead I'm afraid to go out into the hall by myself—it's dark there

*Luka* [*following her*] You better fear the living—I'm telling you

*Natasha* Take me across the hall, grandfather

*Luka* Come on—come on—I'll take you across—

[*They go away Pause*]

*Zob* [*to the TARTAR*] Oh-ho! Spring will soon be here, little brother, and it'll be quite warm In the villages the peasants are already making ready their ploughs and harrows, preparing to till . and we Hassan? Snoring already? Damned Mohammedan!

*Bubnoff* Tartars love sleep!

*Kleshtch* [*in centre of room, staring in front of him*] What am I to do now?

*Zob* Lie down and sleep—that's all

*Kleshtch* [*softly*] But—she . how about .

[*No one answers him SATINE and the ACTOR enter*]

*The Actor* [*yelling*] Old man! Come here, my trusted Duke of Kent!

*Satine* Miklookha-Maklai is coming—ho-ho!

*The Actor* It has been decided upon! Old man, where's the town—where are you?

*Satine* Fata Morgana, the old man bilked you from top to bottom! There's nothing—no towns—no people—nothing at all!

*The Actor* You lie!

*The Tartar* [*jumping up*] Where's the boss? I'm going to the boss If I can't sleep, I won't pay! Corpses—drunkards [*Exit quickly*]

[*SATINE looks after him and whistles*]

*Bubnoff* [*in a sleepy voice*] Go to bed, boys—be quiet . night is for sleep

*The Actor* Yes—so—there's a corpse here "Our net fished up a corpse

" Verses—by Béranger

*Satine* [*screams*] The dead can't hear the dead do not feel—Scream!—Roar! the dead don't hear!

[*In the doorway appears LUKA*]

### ACT THREE

"The Waste," a yard strewn with rubbish and overgrown with weeds Back, a high brick wall which shuts out the sight of the sky Near it are elder-bushes Right, the dark, wooden wall of some sort of house, barn or stable Left, the grey tumbledown

wall of KOSTILYOFF'S night asylum It is built at an angle so that the further corner reaches almost to the center of the yard Between it and the wall runs a narrow passage In the grey, plastered wall are two windows, one on a level with the ground, the other about six feet higher up and closer to the brick wall Near the latter wall is a big sledge turned upside down and a beam about twelve feet long Right of the wall is a heap of old planks Evening The sun is setting, throwing a crimson light on the brick wall Early spring, the snow having only recently melted The elder-bushes are not yet in bud

NATASHA and NASTYA are sitting side by side on the beam LUKA and the BARON are on the sledge KLESHTCH is stretched on the pile of planks to the right BUBNOFF'S face is at the ground floor window

NASTYA [with closed eyes, nodding her head in rhythm to the tale she is telling in a sing-song voice] So then at night he came into the garden I had been waiting for him quite a while I trembled with fear and grief—he trembled, too he was as white as chalk—and he had the pistol in his hand

Natasha [chewing sunflower seeds] Oh—are these students really such desperate fellows?

NASTYA And he says to me in a dreadful voice "My precious darling "

Bubnoff Ho-ho! Precious—?

The Baron Shut up! If you don't like it, you can lump it! But don't interrupt her . Go on

NASTYA "My one and only love," he says, "my parents," he says, "refuse to give their consent to our wedding—and threaten to disown me because of my love for you Therefore," he says, "I must take my life" And his pistol was huge—and loaded with ten bullets "Farewell," he says, "beloved comrade! I have made up my mind for good and all I can't live without you " and I replied "My unforgettable friend—my Raoul "

Bubnoff [surprised] What? What? Krawl—did you call him—?

The Baron NASTYA! But last time his name was Gaston

NASTYA [jumping up] Shut up, you bastards! Ah—you lousy mongrels! You think for a moment that you can understand love—true love? My love was real

honest-to-God love! [To the BARON] You good-for-nothing! educated, you call yourself—drinking coffee in bed, did you?

Luka Now, now! Wait, people! Don't interfere! Show a little respect to your neighbours it isn't the word that matters, but what's in back of the word That's what matters! Go on, girl! it's all right!

Bubnoff Go on, crowd! See if you can make your feathers white!

The Baron Well—continue!

Natasha Pay no attention to them what are they? They're just jealous they've nothing to tell about themselves

NASTYA [sits down again] I'm going to say no more! If they don't believe me they'll laugh [Stops suddenly, is silent for a few seconds, then, shutting her eyes, continues in a loud and intense voice, swaying her hands as if to the rhythm of far music] And then I replied to him "Joy of my life! My bright moon! And I, too, I can't live without you—because I love you madly, so madly—and I shall keep on loving you as long as my heart beats in my bosom But—" I say—"don't take your young life! Think how necessary it is to your dear parents whose only happiness you are Leave me! Better that I should perish from longing for you, my life! I alone! I—ah—as such, such! Better that I should die—it doesn't matter I am of no use to the world—and I have nothing, nothing at all—"

[Covers her face with her hand and weeps gently]

Natasha [in a low voice] Don't cry—don't!

[LUKA, smiling, strokes NASTYA'S head]

Bubnoff [laughs] Ah—you limb of Satan!

The Baron [also laughs] Hey, old man? Do you think it's true? It's all from that book, *Fatal Love* it's all nonsense! Let her alone!

Natasha And what's it to you? Shut up—or God'll punish you!

NASTYA [bitterly] God damn your soul! You worthless pig! Soul—bah!—you haven't got one!

Luka [takes NASTYA'S hand] Come, dear! it's nothing! Don't be angry—I know—I believe you! You're right, not they! If you believe you had a real love affair, then you did—yes! And as for him—don't be angry with a fellow-lodger maybe he's

really jealous, and that's why he's laughing. Maybe he never had any real love—maybe not—come on—let's go!

*Nastya* [pressing her hand against her breast] Grandfather! So help me God—it happened! It happened! He was a student, a Frenchman—Gastotcha was his name—he had a little black beard—and patent leathers—may God strike me dead if I'm lying! And he loved me so—my God, how he loved me!

*Luka* Yes, yes, it's all right. I believe you! Patent leathers, you said? Well, well, well—and you loved him, did you?

[Disappears with her around the corner]

*The Baron* God—~~isn't~~ she a fool, though? She's good-hearted—but such a fool—it's past belief!

*Bubnoff* And why are people so fond of lying—just as if they were up before the judge—really!

*Natasha* I guess lying is more fun than speaking the truth—I, too.

*The Baron* What—you, too? Go on!

*Natasha* Oh—I imagine things—invent them—and I wait—

*The Baron* For what?

*Natasha* [smiling confusedly] Oh—I think that perhaps—well—to-morrow somebody will really appear—some one—oh—out of the ordinary—or something'll happen—also out of the ordinary. I've been waiting for it—oh—always. But, really, what is there to wait for? [Pause]

*The Baron* [with a slight smile] Nothing—I expect nothing! What is past, is past! Through! Over with! And then what?

*Natasha* And then—well—to-morrow I imagine suddenly that I'll die—and I get frightened. In summer it's all right to dream of death—then there are thunder storms—one might get struck by lightning.

*The Baron* You've a hard life. . . your sister's a wicked-tempered devil!

*Natasha* Tell me—does anybody live happily? It's hard for all of us—I can see that.

*Kleshtch* [who until this moment has sat motionless and indifferent, jumps up suddenly] For all? You he! Not for all! If it were so—all right! Then it wouldn't hurt—yes!

*Bubnoff* What in hell's bit you? Just listen to him yelping!

[*KLESHTCH* lies down again and grunts]

*The Baron* Well—I'd better go and make my peace with Nastinka—if I don't, she won't treat me to vodka.

*Bubnoff* Hm—people love to lie with Nastya—I can see the reason why. She's used to painting that mutt of hers—and now she wants to paint her soul as well. . . put rouge on her soul, eh? But the others—why do they? Take Luka for instance—he lies a lot. . . and what does he get out of it? He's an old fellow, too—why does he do it?

*The Baron* [smiling and walking away] All people have drab-colored souls—and they like to brighten them up a bit.

*Luka* [appearing from round the corner] You, sir, why do you tease the girl? Leave her alone—let her cry if it amuses her. She weeps for her own pleasure—what harm is it to you?

*The Baron* Nonsense, old man! She's a nuisance. Raoul to-day, Gaston to-morrow—always the same old yarn, though! Still—I'll go and make up with her. [Leaves]

*Luka* That's right—go—and be nice to her. Being nice to people never does them any harm.

*Natasha* You're so good, little father—why are you so good?

*Luka* Good, did you say? Well—call it that! [Behind the brick wall is heard soft singing and the sounds of a concertina] Some one has to be kind, girl—some one must pity people! Christ pitied everybody—and he said to us “Go and do likewise!” I tell you—if you pity a man when he most needs it, good comes of it. Why—I used to be a watchman on the estate of an engineer near Tomsk—all right—the house was right in the middle of a forest—lonely place—winter came—and I remained all by myself. Well—one night I heard a noise—

*Natasha* Thieves?

*Luka* Exactly! Thieves creeping in! I took my gun—I went out. I looked and saw two of them opening a window—and so busy that they didn't even see me. I yell “Hey there—get out of here!” And they turn on me with their axes—I warn them to stand back, or I'd shoot—and as I speak, I keep on covering them with my gun, first the one, then the other—they go down on their knees, as if to implore me for mercy. And by that time I was furious—because of those axes, you see—and so I say to them

"I was chasing you, you scoundrels—and you didn't go. Now you go and break off some stout branches!"—and they did so—and I say, "Now—one of you lie down and let the other one flog him!" So they obey me and flog each other—and then they begin to implore me again. "Grandfather," they say, "for God's sake give us some bread! We're hungry!" There's thieves for you, my dear! [*Laughs*] And with an ax, too! Yes—honest peasants, both of them! And I say to them, "You should have asked for bread straight away!" And they say, "We got tired of asking—you beg and beg—and nobody gives you a crumb—it hurts!" So they stayed with me all that winter—one of them, Stepan, would take my gun and go shooting in the forest—and the other, Yakoff, was ill most of the time—he coughed a lot—and so the three of us together looked after the house then spring came . . . "Good-bye, grandfather," they said—and they went away—back home to Russia.

Natasha Were they escaped convicts?

Luka That's just what they were—escaped convicts—from a Siberian prison camp honest peasants! If I hadn't felt sorry for them—they might have killed me—or maybe worse—and then there would have been trial and prison and afterwards Siberia—what's the sense of it? Prison teaches no good—and Siberia doesn't either—but another human being can yes, a human being can teach another one kindness—very simply! [*Pause*]

Bubnoff Hm—yes—I, for instance, don't know how to lie why—as far as I'm concerned, I believe in coming out with the whole truth and putting it on thick why fuss about it?

Kleshtch [*again jumps up as if his clothes were on fire, and screams*] What truth? Where is there truth? [*Tearing at his ragged clothes*] Here's truth for you! No work! No strength! That's the only truth! Shelter—there's no shelter! You die—that's the truth! Hell! What do I want with the truth? Let me breathe! Why should I be blamed? What do I want with truth? To live—Christ Almighty!—they won't let you live—and that's another truth!

Bubnoff He's mad!

Luka Dear Lord listen to me, brother—

Kleshtch [*trembling with excitement*] They say there's truth! You, old man, try to console every one I tell you—I hate every one! And there's your truth—God curse it—understand? I tell you—God curse it!

[*Rushes away round the corner, turning as he goes*]

Luka Ah—how excited he got! Where did he run off to?

Natasha He's off his head.

Bubnoff God—didn't he say a whole lot, though? As if he was playing drama—he gets those fits often he isn't used to life yet

Pepel [*comes slowly round the corner*]. Peace on all this honest gathering! Well, Luka, you wily old fellow—still telling them stories?

Luka You should have heard how that fellow carried on!

Pepel Kleshtch—wasn't it? What's wrong with him? He was running like one possessed!

Luka You'd do the same if your own heart were breaking!

Pepel [*sitting down*] I don't like him . . . he's got such a nasty, bad temper—and so proud! [*Imitating KLESHTCH*] "I'm a workman!" And he thinks everyone's beneath him Go on working if you feel like it—nothing to be so damned haughty about! If work is the standard—a horse can give us points—pulls like hell and says nothing! Natasha—are your folks at home?

Natasha They went to the cemetery—then to night service.

Pepel So that's why you're free for once—quite a novelty

Luka [*to BUBNOFF, thoughtfully*] There—you say—truth! Truth doesn't always heal a wounded soul For instance, I knew of a man who believed in a land of righteousness

Bubnoff In what?

Luka In a land of righteousness He said "Somewhere on this earth there must be a righteous land—and wonderful people live there—good people! They respect each other, help each other, and everything is peaceful and good!" And so that man—who was always searching for this land of righteousness—he was poor and lived miserably—and when things got to be so bad with him that it seemed there was nothing

else for him to do except lie down and die—even then he never lost heart—but he'd just smile and say "Never mind! I can stand it! A little while longer—and I'll have done with this life—and I'll go in search of the righteous land!"—it was his one happiness—the thought of that land

*Pepel* Well? Did he go there?

*Bubnoff* Where? Ho-ho!

*Luka* And then to this place—in Siberia, by the way—there came a convict—a learned man with books and maps—yes, a learned man who knew all sorts of things—and the other man said to him "Do me a favor—show me where is the land of righteousness and how I can get there" At once the learned man opened his books, spread out his maps, and looked and looked and he said—no—he couldn't find this land anywhere everything was correct—all the lands on earth were marked—but not this land of righteousness

*Pepel [in a low voice]*. Well? Wasn't there a trace of it?

*[BUBNOFF roars with laughter]*

*Natasha* Wait . well, little father?

*Luka* The man wouldn't believe it "It must exist," he said, "look carefully Otherwise," he says, "your books and maps are of no use if there's no land of righteousness" The learned man was offended "My plans," he said, "are correct But there exists no land of righteousness anywhere" Well, then the other man got angry He'd lived and lived and suffered and suffered, and had believed all the time in the existence of this land—and now, according to the plans, it didn't exist at all. He felt robbed! And he said to the learned man "Ah—you scum of the earth! You're not a learned man at all—but just a damned cheat!"—and he gave him a good wallop in the eye—then another one *[After a moment's silence]* And then he went home and hanged himself!

*[All are silent LUKA, smiling, looks at PEPEL and NATASHA]*

*Pepel [low-voiced]* To hell with this story—it isn't very cheerful .

*Natasha* He couldn't stand the disappointment .

*Bubnoff [sullen]* Ah—it's nothing but a fairy-tale

*Pepel* Well—there is the righteous land for you—doesn't exist, it seems

*Natasha* I'm sorry for that man

*Bubnoff* All a story—ho-ho!—land of righteousness—what an idea! *[Exit through window]*

*Luka [pointing to window]* He's laughing! *[Pause]* Well, children, God be with you! I'll leave you soon

*Pepel* Where are you going to?

*Luka* To the Ukraine—I heard they discovered a new religion there—I want to see—yes! People are always seeking—they always want something better—God grant them patience!

*Pepel* You think they'll find it?

*Luka* The people? They will find it! He who seeks, will find! He who desires strongly, will find!

*Natasha* If only they could find something better—invent something better

*Luka* They're trying to! But we must help them, girl—we must respect them .

*Natasha* How can I help them? I am helpless myself!

*Pepel [determined]* Again—listen—I'll speak to you again, Natasha—here—before him—he knows everything run away with me?

*Natasha* Where? From one prison to another?

*Pepel* I told you—I'm through with being a thief, so help me God! I'll quit! If I say so, I'll do it! I can read and write—I'll work—He's been telling me to go to Siberia on my own hook—let's go there together, what do you say? Do you think I'm not disgusted with my life? Oh—Natasha—I know I see I console myself with the thought that there are lots of people who are honored and respected—and who are bigger thieves than I! But what good is that to me? It isn't that I repent

I've no conscience . but I do feel one thing One must live differently One must live a better life one must be able to respect one's own self

*Luka* That's right, friend! May God help you! It's true! A man must respect himself!

*Pepel* I've been a thief from childhood on Everybody always called me "Vaska—the thief—the son of a thief!" Oh—very well then—I am a thief—just imagine—now, perhaps, I'm a thief out of spite—perhaps I'm a thief because no one ever called me anything different . Well, Natasha—?

*Natasha [sadly]* Somehow I don't be-

live in words—and I'm restless today—my heart is heavy as if I were expecting something 't's a pity, Vassily, that you talked to me to-day

*Pepel* When should I? It isn't the first time I speak to you

*Natasha* And why should I go with you? I don't love you so very much—sometimes I like you—and other times the mere sight of you makes me sick it seems—no—I don't really love you when one really loves, one sees no fault But I do see

*Pepel* Never mind—you'll love me after a while! I'll make you care for me if you'll just say yes! For over a year I've watched you you're a decent girl . . . you're kind—you're reliable—I'm very much in love with you

[VASSILISA, in her best dress, appears at window and listens]

*Natasha* Yes—you love me—but how about my sister?

*Pepel* [confused] Well, what of her? There are plenty like her

*Luka* You'll be all right, girl! If there's no bread, you have to eat weeds

*Pepel* [gloomily] Please—feel a little sorry for me! My life isn't all roses—it's a hell of a life little happiness in it

I feel as if a swamp were sucking me under and whatever I try to catch and hold on to, is rotten it breaks Your

sister—oh—I thought she was different if she weren't so greedy after money I'd

have done anything for her sake, if she were only all mine but she must have some-

one else . . . and she has to have money—and freedom because she doesn't like

the straight and narrow she can't help me But you're like a young fir-tree

you bend, but you don't break

*Luka* Yes—go with him, girl, go! He's a good lad—he's all right! Only tell him every now and then that he's a good lad so that he won't forget it—and he'll believe you Just you keep on telling him "Vasya, you're a good man—don't you forget it!" Just think, dear, where else could you go except with him? Your sister is a savage beast and as for her husband, there's little to say of him He's rotten beyond words and all this life here, where will it get you? But this lad is strong

*Natasha* Nowhere to go—I know—I thought of it The only thing is—I've no

faith in anybody—and there's no place for me to turn to

*Pepel* Yes, there is! But I won't let you go that way—I'd rather cut your throat!

*Natasha* [smiling] There—I'm not his wife yet—and he talks already of killing me!

*Pepel* [puts his arms around her] Come, Natasha! Say yes!

*Natasha* [holding him close] But I'll tell you one thing, Vassily—I swear it before God the first time you strike me or hurt me any other way, I'll have no pity on myself I'll either hang myself or

*Pepel* May my hand wither if ever I touch you!

*Luka* Don't doubt him dear! He needs you more than you need him!

*Vassilisa* [from the window] So now they're engaged! Love and advice!

*Natasha* They've come back—oh, God—they saw—oh Vassily

*Pepel* Why are you frightened? Nobody'll dare touch you now!

*Vassilisa* Don't be afraid, Natasha! He won't beat you he don't know how to love or how to beat I know!

*Luka* [in a low voice] Rotten old hag—like a snake in the grass

*Vassilisa* He dares only with the word!

*Kostilyoff* [enters] Natasha! What are you doing here, you parasite? Gossiping? Kicking about your family? And the samovar not ready? And the table not cleared?

*Natasha* [going out] I thought you were going to church ?

*Kostilyoff* None of your business what we intended doing! Mind your own affairs—and do what you're told!

*Pepel* Shut up, you! She's no longer your servant! Don't go, Natasha—don't do a thing!

*Natasha* Stop ordering me about—you're commencing too soon! [Leaves]

*Pepel* [to Kostilyoff] That's enough You've used her long enough—now she's mine!

*Kostilyoff* Yours? When did you buy her—and for how much?

[VASSILISA roars with laughter]

*Luka* Go away, Vasya!

*Pepel* Don't laugh, you fools—or first thing you know I'll make you cry!

*Vassilisa* Oh, how terrible! Oh—how you frighten me!

*Luka* Vassily—go away! Don't you see—she's goading you on ridiculing you, don't you understand?

*Pepel* Yes You lie, lie! You won't get what you want!

*Vassilisa* Nor will I get what I don't want, Vasya!

*Pepel* [shaking his fist at her] We'll see [Exit]

*Vassilisa* [disappearing through window] I'll arrange some wedding for you

*Kostilyoff* [crossing to LUKA] Well, old man, how's everything?

*Luka* All right!

*Kostilyoff* You're going away, they say—?

*Luka* Soon.

*Kostilyoff* Where to?

*Luka* I'll follow my nose . . .

*Kostilyoff* Tramping, eh? Don't like stopping in one place all the time, do you?

*Luka* Even water won't pass beneath a stone that's sunk too firmly in the ground, they say .

*Kostilyoff* That's true for a stone But man must settle in one place Men can't live like cockroaches, crawling about wherever they want . . . A man must stick to one place—and not wander about aimlessly .

*Luka* But suppose his home is wherever he hangs his hat?

*Kostilyoff*. Why, then—he's a vagabond—useless . a human being must be of some sort of use—he must work

*Luka* That's what you think, eh?

*Kostilyoff* Yes—sure . . . just look! What's a vagabond? A strange fellow unlike all others If he's a real pilgrim then he's some good in the world . perhaps he discovered a new truth Well—but not every truth is worth while Let him keep it to himself and shut up about it! Or else—let him speak in a way which no one can understand don't let him interfere don't let him stir up people without cause! It's none of his business how other people live! Let him follow his own righteous path in the woods—or in a monastery—away from everybody! He mustn't interfere—nor condemn other people—but pray—pray for all of us—for all the world's sins—for mine—for yours—for everybody's To pray—that's why he forsakes the world's turmoil! That's so! [Pause] But you—what sort of a pilgrim are you—? An

honest person must have a passport . all honest people have passports yes!

*Luka* In this world there are people—and also just plain men

*Kostilyoff* Don't coin wise sayings! Don't give me riddles! I'm as clever as you . . . what's the difference—people and men?

*Luka* What riddle is there? I say—there's sterile and there's fertile ground whatever you sow in it, grows that's all

*Kostilyoff* What do you mean?

*Luka* Take yourself for instance if the Lord God himself said to you "Mikhailo, be a man!"—it would be useless—nothing would come of it—you're doomed to remain just as you are

*Kostilyoff* Oh—but do you realize that my wife's uncle is a policeman, and that if I

*Vassilisa* [coming in] Mikhail Ivanitch—come and have your tea

*Kostilyoff* [to LUKA] You listen! Get out! You leave this place—hear?

*Vassilisa* Yes—get out, old man! Your tongue's too long! And—who knows—you may be an escaped convict

*Kostilyoff* If I ever see sign of you again after to-day—well—I've warned you!

*Luka* You'll call your uncle, eh? Go on—call him! Tell him you've caught an escaped convict—and maybe uncle'll get a reward—perhaps all of three kopecks

*Bubnoff* [in the window] What are you bargaining about? Three kopecks—for what?

*Luka* They're threatening to sell me

*Vassilisa* [to her husband] Come

*Bubnoff* For three kopecks? Well—look out, old man—they may even do it for one!

*Kostilyoff* [to BUBNOFF] You have a habit of jumping up like a jack-in-the-box!

*Vassilisa* The world is full of shady people and crooks—

*Luka* Hope you'll enjoy your tea!

*Vassilisa* [turning] Shut up! You rotten toadstool! [Leaves with her husband]

*Luka* I'm off to-night

*Bubnoff* That's right Don't outstay your welcome!

*Luka* True enough

*Bubnoff* I know Perhaps I've escaped the gallows by getting away in time

*Luka* Well?

*Bubnoff* That's true It was this way.



My wife took up with my boss He was great at his trade—could dye a dog's skin so that it looked like a raccoon's—could change cat's skin into kangaroo—muskrats, all sorts of things Well—my wife took up with him—and they were so mad about each other that I got afraid they might poison me or something like that—so I commenced beating up my wife—and the boss beat me . we fought savagely! Once he tore off half my whiskers—and broke one of my ribs well, then I, too, got enraged I cracked my wife over the head with an iron yard-measure—well—and altogether it was like an honest-to-God war! And then I saw that nothing really could come of it they were planning to get the best of me! So I started planning—how to kill my wife—I thought of it a whole lot but I thought better of it just in time and got away

*Luka* That was best! Let them go on changing dogs into raccoons!

*Bubnoff* Only—the shop was in my wife's name and so I did myself out of it, you see? Although, to tell the truth, I would have drunk it away I'm a hard drinker, you know

*Luka* A hard drinker—oh

*Bubnoff* The worst you ever met! Once I start drinking, I drink everything in sight, I'll spend every bit of money I have—everything except my bones and my skin what's more, I'm lazy it's terrible how I hate work!

[Enter SATINE and the ACTOR, quarrelling]

*Satine* Nonsense! You'll go nowhere—it's all a damned lie! Old man, what did you stuff him with all those fairy-tales for?

*The Actor* You lie! Grandfather! Tell him that he lies!—I am going away I worked to-day—I swept the streets and I didn't have a drop of vodka What do you think of that? Here they are—two fifteen-kopeck pieces—and I'm sober!

*Satine* Why—that's absurd! Give it to me—I'll either drink it up—or lose it at cards

*The Actor* Get out—this is for my journey

*Luka* [to SATINE] And you—why are you trying to lead him astray?

*Satine* Tell me, soothsayer, beloved by the gods, what's my future going to be? I've gone to pieces, brother—but everything

isn't lost yet, grandfather there are sharks in this world who got more brains than I!

*Luka* You're cheerful, Constantine—and very agreeable!

*Bubnoff* Actor, come over here! [The ACTOR crosses to window, sits down on the sill before BUBNOFF, and speaks in a low voice with him]

*Satine* You know brother, I used to be a clever youngster It's nice to think of it I was a devil of a fellow danced splendidly, played on the stage, loved to amuse people it was awfully gay

*Luka* How did you get to be what you are?

*Satine* You're inquisitive, old man! You want to know everything? What for?

*Luka* I want to understand the ways of men—I look at you, and I don't understand You're a bold lad, Constantine, and you're no fool yet, all of a sudden

*Satine* It's prison, grandfather—I spent four years and seven months in prison afterwards—where could I go?

*Luka* Aha! What were you there for?

*Satine* On account of a scoundrel—whom I killed in a fit of rage and despair and in prison I learned to play cards

*Luka* You killed—because of a woman?

*Satine* Because of my own sister But look here—leave me alone! I don't care for these cross-examinations—and all this happened a long time ago It's already nine years since my sister's death Brother, she was a wonderful girl

*Luka* You take life easily! And only a while ago that locksmith was here—and how he did yell!

*Satine* Kleshtch?

*Luka* Yes—"There's no work," he shouted, "there isn't anything"

*Satine* He'll get used to it What could I do?

*Luka* [softly] Look—here he comes!

[KLESHTCH walks in slowly, his head bowed low]

*Satine* Hey, widower! Why are you so down in the mouth? What are you thinking?

*Kleshtch* I'm thinking—what'll I do? I've no food—nothing—the funeral ate up all

*Satine* I'll give you a bit of advice do nothing! Just be a burden to the world at large!



*Kleshtch* Go on—talk—I'd be ashamed of myself

*Satine* Why—people aren't ashamed to let you live worse than a dog Just think you stop work—so do I—so do hundreds, thousands of others—everybody—understand?—everybody'll quit working . nobody'll do a damned thing—and then what'll happen?

*Kleshtch* They'll all starve to death

*Luka* [to SATINE] If those are your notions, you ought to join the order of Béguines—you know—there's some such organization

*Satine* I know—grandfather—and they're no fools

[NASTASHA is heard screaming behind KOSTILYOFF'S window "What for? Stop! What have I done?"]

*Luka* [worried] Natasha! That was she crying—oh, God

[From KOSTILYOFF'S room is heard noise, shuffling, breaking of crockery, and KOSTILYOFF'S shrill cry "Ah! Heretic! Bitch!"]

*Vassilisa* Wait, wait—I'll teach her—there, there!

*Natasha* They're beating me—killing me

*Satine* [shouts through the window] Hey—you there—

*Luka* [trembling] Where's Vassily—? Call Vaska—oh, God—listen, brothers

*The Actor* [running out] I'll find him at once!

*Bubnoff* They beat her a lot these days . . .

*Satine* Come on, old man—we'll be witnesses

*Luka* [following SATINE] Oh—witnesses—what for? Vassily—he should be called at once!

*Natasha* Sister—sister dear! Va-a-a

*Bubnoff* They've gagged her—I'll go and see

[The noise in KOSTILYOFF'S room dies down gradually as if they had gone into the hallway The old man's cry "Stop!" is heard A door is slammed noisily, and the latter sound cuts off all the other noises sharply Quiet on the stage Twilight]

*Kleshtch* [seated on the sledge, indifferently, rubbing his hands, mutters at first indistinguishably, then] What then? One

must live [Louder] Must have shelter—well? There's no shelter, no roof—nothing . . there's only man—man alone—no hope . no help

[Exit slowly, his head bent A few moments of ominous silence, then somewhere in the hallway a mass of sounds, which grows in volume and comes nearer Individual voices are heard]

*Vassilisa* I'm her sister—let go

*Kostilyoff* What right have you ?

*Vassilisa* Jail-bird!

*Satine* Call Vaska—quickly! Zob—hit him!

[A police whistle The TARTAR runs in, his right hand in a sling]

*The Tartar* There's a new law for you—kill only in daytime!

[Enter ZOB, followed by MIEDVIEDIEFF]

*Zob* I handed him a good one!

*Miedviedieff* You—how dare you fight?

*The Tartar* What about yourself? What's your duty?

*Miedviedieff* [running after] Stop—give back my whistle!

*Kostilyoff* [runs in] Abram! Stop him! Hold him! He's a murderer—he

[Enter KVASHNYA and NASTYA supporting NATASHA who is disheveled SATINE backs away, pushing away VASSILISA who is trying to attack her sister, while, near her, ALYOSHA jumps up and down like a madman, whistles into her ear, shrieking, roaring Also other ragged men and women]

*Satine* [to VASSILISA] Well—you damned bitch!

*Vassilisa* Let go, you jail-bird! I'll tear you to pieces—if I have to pay for it with my own life!

*Kvashnya* [leading NATASHA aside] You Karpovna—that's enough—stand back—aren't you ashamed? Or are you crazy?

*Miedviedieff* [seizes SATINE] Aha—caught at last!

*Satine* Zob—beat them up! Vaska—Vaska

[They all, in a chaotic mass, struggle near the brick wall They lead NATASHA to the right, and set her on a pile of wood PEPEL rushes in from the hallway and, silently, with powerful movements, pushes the crowd aside]

*PepeL* Nataha, where are you you

*Kostilyoff [disappearing behind a corner]*  
Abram! Seize Vaska! Comrades—help us  
get him! The thief! The robber!

*Pepel* You—you old bastard! [*Aiming  
a terrific blow at KOSTILYOFF* KOSTILYOFF  
falls so that only the upper part of his body  
is seen PEPEL rushes to NATASHA]

*Vassilisa* Beat Vaska! Brothers! Beat  
the thief!

*Miedvedieff [yells to SATINE]* Keep out  
of this—it's a family affair . they're rela-  
tives—and who are you?

*Pepel [to NATASHA]* What did she do to  
you? She used a knife?

*Kvashnya* God—what beasts! They've  
scalded the child's feet with boiling water!

*Nastya* They overturned the samo-  
var

*The Tartar* Maybe an accident—you  
must make sure—you can't exactly tell

*Natasha [half fainting]* Vassily—take  
me away—

*Vassilisa* Good people! Come! Look!  
He's dead! Murdered!

[*All crowd into the hallway near Ko-  
STILYOFF* BUBNOFF leaves the crowd  
and crosses to PEPEL]

*Bubnoff [in a low voice, to PEPEL]* Vaska  
—the old man is done for!

*Pepel [looks at him, as though he does  
not understand]* Go—for help—she must  
be taken to the hospital I'll settle with  
them

*Bubnoff* I say—the old man—somebody's  
killed him

[*The noise on the stage dies out like a  
fire under water* Distinct, whispered  
exclamations "Not really?" "Well  
—let's go away, brothers!" "The  
devil!" "Hold on now!" "Let's get  
away before the police come!" The  
crowd disappears BUBNOFF, the TAR-  
TAR, NASTYA, and KVASHNYA, rush up  
to KOSTILYOFF's body]

*Vassilisa [rises and cries out triumph-  
antly]* Killed—my husband's killed!  
Vaska killed him! I saw him! Brothers, I  
saw him! Well—Vasya—the police!

*Pepel [moves away from NATASHA]* Let  
me alone [*Looks at KOSTILYOFF, to VASSI-  
LISA*] Well—are you glad? [*Touches the  
corpse with his foot*] The old bastard is  
dead! Your wish has been granted! Why  
not do the same to you? [*Throws himself  
at her*]

[*SATINE and ZOB quickly overpower  
him, and VASSILISA disappears in the  
passage*]

*Satine* Come to your senses!

*Zob* Hold on! Not so fast!

*Vassilisa [appearing]* Well, Vaska, dear  
friend? You can't escape your fate  
police—Abram—whistle!

*Miedvedieff* Those devils tore my  
whistle off!

*Alyoshka* Here it is! [*Whistles, MIEU-  
VIEDIEFF runs after him*]

*Satine [leading PEPEL to NATASHA]* Don't  
be afraid, Vaska! Killed in a row! That's  
nonsense—only manslaughter—you won't  
have to serve a long term

*Vassilisa* Hold Vaska—he killed him—  
I saw it!

*Satine* I, too, gave the old man a couple  
of blows—he was easily ficed you call  
me as witness, Vaska!

*Pepel* I don't need to defend myself  
I want to drag Vassilisa into this mess—and  
I'll do it—she was the one who wanted it  
she was the one who urged me to kill  
him—she goaded me on .

*Natasha [sudden and loud]* Oh—I un-  
derstand—so that's it, Vassily? Good peo-  
ple! They're both guilty—my sister and he  
—they're both guilty! They had it all  
planned! So, Vassily, that's why you spoke  
to me a while ago—so that she should over-  
hear everything—? Good people! She's  
his mistress—you know it—everybody knows  
it—they're both guilty! She—she urged  
him to kill her husband—he was in their  
way—and so was I! And now they've  
maimed me

*Pepel* Natalia! What's the matter with  
you? What are you saying?

*Satine* Oh—hell!

*Vassilisa* You lie She lies He—Vaska  
killed him

*Natasha* They're both guilty! God  
damn you both!

*Satine* What a mix-up! Hold on, Vas-  
sily—or they'll run you between them!

*Zob* I can't understand it—oh—what a  
mess!

*Pepel* Natalia! It can't be true! Surely  
you don't believe that I—with her—

*Satine* So help me God, Natasha! Just  
think

*Vassilisa [in the passage]* They've killed  
my husband—Your Excellency! Vaska

Pepel, the thief, killed him, Captain! I saw it—everybody saw it

*Natasha* [tossing about in agony, her mind wandering] Good people—my sister and Vaska killed him! The police—listen—this sister of mine—here—she urged, coaxed her lover—there he stands—the scoundrel! They both killed him! Put them in jail! Bring them before the judge! Take me along, too! To prison! Christ! Almighty—take me to prison, too!

#### ACT FOUR

*Same as Act One But PEPEL's room is no longer there, and the partition has been removed Furthermore, there is no anvil at the place where KLESHTCH used to sit and work In the corner, where PEPEL's room used to be, the TARTAR lies stretched out, rather restless, and groaning from time to time KLESHTCH sits at one end of the table, repairing a concertina and now and then testing the stops At the other end of the table sit SATINE, the BARON, and NASTYA In front of them stand a bottle of vodka, three bottles of beer, and a large loaf of black bread The ACTOR lies on top of the stove, shifting about and coughing It is night The stage is lit by a lamp in the middle of the table Outside the wind howls*

*Kleshtch* Yes. he disappeared during the confusion and noise

*The Baron* He vanished under the very eyes of the police—just like a puff of smoke

*Satine* That's how sinners flee from the company of the righteous!

*Nastya* He was a dear old soul! But you—you aren't men—you're just—oh—like rust on iron!

*The Baron* [drinks] Here's to you, my lady!

*Satine* He was an inquisitive old fellow—yes! Nastenka here fell in love with him

*Nastya* Yes! I did! Madly! It's true! He saw everything—understood everything

*Satine* [laughing] Yes, generally speaking, I would say that he was—oh—like mush to those who can't chew

*The Baron* [laughing] Right! Like plaster on a boil!

*Kleshtch* He was merciful—you people don't know what pity means

*Satine* What good can I do you by pitying you?

*Kleshtch* You needn't have pity—but you needn't harm or offend your fellow-beings, either!

*The Tartar* [sits up on his bunk, nursing his wounded hand carefully] He was a fine old man The law of life was the law of his heart . and he who obeys this law, is good, while he who disregards it, perishes

*The Baron* What law, Prince?

*The Tartar.* There are a number—different ones—you know

*The Baron.* Proceed!

*The Tartar* Do not do harm unto others—such is the law!

*Satine* Oh—you mean the Penal Code, criminal and correctional, eh?

*The Baron* And also the Code of Penalties inflicted by Justices of the Peace!

*The Tartar* No I mean the Koran It is the supreme law—and your own soul ought to be the Koran—yes!

*Kleshtch* [testing his concertina] It wheezes like all hell! But the Prince speaks the truth—one must live abiding by the law—by the teachings of the Gospels

*Satine* Well—go ahead and do it!

*The Baron* Just try it!

*The Tartar* The Prophet Mohammed gave to us the law He said "Here is the law! Do as it is written therein!" Later on a time will arrive when the Koran will have outlived its purpose—and time will bring forth its own laws—every generation will create its own

*Satine* To be sure! Time passed on—and gave us—the Criminal Code It's a strong law, brother—it won't wear off so very soon!

*Nastya* [banging her glass on the table] Why—why do I stay here—with you? I'll go away somewhere—to the ends of the world!

*The Baron* Without any shoes, my lady?

*Nastya* I'll go—naked, if must be—creeping on all fours!

*The Baron* That'll be rather picturesque, my lady—on all fours!

*Nastya* Yes—and I'll crawl if I have to—anything at all—as long as I don't have to see your faces any longer—oh, I'm so

sick of it all—the life—the people—everything!

*Satine* When you go, please take the actor along—he's preparing to go to the very same place—he has learned that within a half mile's distance of the end of the world there's a hospital for diseased organs.

*The Actor* [raising his head over the top of the stove] A hospital for organisms—you fool!

*Satine* For organisms—poisoned with vodka!

*The Actor* Yes! He will go! He will indeed! You'll see!

*The Baron* Who is he, sir?

*The Actor* I!

*The Baron* Thanks, servant of the goddess—what's her name? The goddess of drama—tragedy—whatever is her name?

*The Actor* The muse, idiot! Not the goddess—the muse!

*Satine* Lachesis—Hera—Aphrodite—Atropos—oh! To hell with them all! You see—Baron—it was the old man who stuffed the actor's head full with this rot . . .

*The Baron* That old man's a fool!

*The Actor* Ignoramuses! Beasts! Melpomene—that's her name! Heartless brutes! Bastards! You'll see! He'll go! "On with the orgy, dismal spirits!"—poem—ah—by Béranger! Yes—he'll find some spot where there's no—no

*The Baron* Where there's nothing, sir?

*The Actor* Right! Nothing! "This hole shall be my grave—I am dying—ill and exhausted " Why do you exist? Why?

*The Baron* You! God or genius or orgy—or whatever you are—don't roar so loud!

*The Actor* You hel! I'll roar all I want to!

*Nastya* [lifting her head from the table and throwing up her hands] Go on! Yell! Let them listen to you!

*The Baron* Where is the sense, my lady?

*Satine* Leave them alone, Baron! To hell with the lot! Let them yell—let them knock their damned heads off if they feel like it! There's a method in their madness! Don't you go and interfere with people as that old fellow did! Yes—it's he—the damned old fool—he bewitched the whole gang of us!

*Kleshtch* He persuaded them to go away—but failed to show them the road

*The Baron* That old man was a humbug!

*Nastya* Lar! You're a humbug yourself!

*The Baron* Shut up, my lady!

*Kleshtch* The old man didn't like truth very much—as a matter of fact he strongly resented it—and wasn't he right, though? Just look—where is there any truth? And yet, without it, you can't breathe! For instance, our Tartar Prince over there, crushed his hand at his work—and now he'll have to have his arm amputated—and there's the truth for you!

*Satine* [striking the table with his clenched fist] Shut up! You sons of bitches! Fools! Not another word about that old fellow! [To the Baron.] You, Baron, are the worst of the lot! You don't understand a thing, and you lie like the devil! The old man's no humbug! What's the truth? Man! Man—that's the truth! He understood man—you don't! You're all as dumb as stones! I understand the old man—yes! He lied—but lied out of sheer pity for you. God damn you! Lots of people lie out of pity for their fellow-beings! I know! I've read about it! They lie—oh—beautifully, inspiringly, stirringly! Some lies bring comfort, and others bring peace—a lie alone can justify the burden which crushed a workman's hand and condemns those who are starving! I know what lying means! The weakling and the one who is a parasite through his very weakness—they both need lies—lies are their support, their shield, their armor! But the man who is strong, who is his own master, who is free and does not have to suck his neighbors' blood—he needs no lies! To lie—it's the creed of slaves and masters of slaves! Truth is the religion of the free man!

*The Baron* Bravo! Well spoken! Hear, hear! I agree! You speak like an honest man!

*Satine* And why can't a crook at times speak the truth—since honest people at times speak like crooks? Yes—I've forgotten a lot—but I still know a thing or two! The old man? Oh—he's wise! He affected me as acid affects a dirty old silver coin! Let's drink to his health! Fill the glasses

[NASTYA fills a glass with beer and hands it to SATINE, who laughs] The old man lives within himself—he looks upon all the world from his own angle. Once I asked him "Grand-dad, why do people

live?" [*Tries to imitate LUKA's voice and gestures*] And he replied "Why, my dear fellow, people live in the hope of something better! For example—let's say there are carpenters in this world, and all sorts of trash people and they give birth to a carpenter the like of which has never been seen upon the face of the earth. he's way above everybody else, and has no equal among carpenters! The brilliancy of his personality was reflected on all his trade, on all the other carpenters, so that they advanced twenty years in one day! This applies to all other trades—blacksmiths and shoemakers and other workmen—and all the peasants—and even the aristocrats live in the hopes of a higher life! Each individual thinks that he's living for his own self, but in reality he lives in the hope of something better. A hundred years—sometimes longer—do we expect, live for the finer, higher life." [*NASTYA stares intently into SATINE's face. KLESHTCH stops working and listens. The BARON bows his head very low, drumming softly on the table with his fingers. The ACTOR, peering down from the stove, tries to climb noiselessly into the bunk*] "Every one, brothers, every one lives in the hope of something better. That's why we must respect each and every human being! How do we know who he is, why he was born, and what he is capable of accomplishing? Perhaps his coming into the world will prove to be our good fortune. Especially must we respect little children! Children—need freedom! Don't interfere with their lives! Respect children!"

[*Pause*]

*The Baron* [*thoughtfully*] Hm—yes—something better?—That reminds me of my family. an old family dating back to the time of Catherine. all noblemen, soldiers, originally French—they served their country and gradually rose higher and higher. In the days of Nicholas the First my grandfather, Gustave DeBille, held a high post—riches—hundreds of serfs horses—cooks—

*Nastya* You liar! It isn't true!

*The Baron* [*jumping up*] What? Well—go on—

*Nastya* It isn't true

*The Baron* [*screams*] A house in Moscow! A house in Petersburg! Carriages! Carriages with coats of arms!

[*KLESHTCH takes his concertina and goes to one side, watching the scene with interest*]

*Nastya* You lie!

*The Baron* Shut up!—I say—dozens of footmen

*Nastya* [*delighted*] You lie!

*The Baron* I'll kill you!

*Nastya* [*ready to run away*] There were no carriages!

*Satine* Stop, Nastenka! Don't infuriate him!

*The Baron* Wait—you bitch! My grandfather

*Nastya* There was no grandfather! There was nothing!

[*SATINE roars with laughter*]

*The Baron* [*worn out with rage, sits down on bench*] *Satine*! Tell that slut—what? You, too, are laughing? You—don't believe me either? [*Cries out in despair, pounding the table with his fists*] It's true—damn the whole lot of you!

*Nastya* [*triumphantly*] So—you're crying? Understand now what a human being feels like when nobody believes him?

*Kleshtch* [*returning to the table*] I thought there'd be a fight

*The Tartar* Oh—people are fools! It's too bad

*The Baron* I shall not permit any one to ridicule me! I have proofs—documents—damn you!

*Satine* Forget it! Forget about your grandfather's carriages! You can't drive anywhere in a carriage of the past!

*The Baron* How dare she—just the same—?

*Nastya* Just imagine! How dare I—?

*Satine* You see—she does dare! How is she any worse than you are? Although, surely, in her past there wasn't even a father and mother, let alone carriages and a grandfather

*The Baron* [*quieting down*] Devil take you—you do know how to argue dispassionately—and I, it seems—I've no will-power

*Satine* Acquire some—it's useful

[*Pause*] *Nastya*! Are you going to the hospital?

*Nastya* What for?

*Satine* To see Natasha

*Nastya* Oh—just woke up, did you? She's been out of the hospital for some time—and they can't find a trace of her

*Satine* Oh—that woman's a goner!

*Kleshtch* It's interesting to see whether Vaska will get the best of Vassilisa, or the other way around—?

*Nastya* Vassilisa will win out! She's shrewd! And Vaska will go to the gallows!

*Satine* For manslaughter? No—only to jail

*Nastya* Too bad—the gallows would have been better—that's where all of you should be sent—swept off into a hole—like filth

*Satine* [astounded] What's the matter? Are you crazy?

*The Baron* Oh—give her a wallop—that'll teach her to be less impertinent

*Nastya* Just you try to touch me!

*The Baron* I shall!

*Satine* Stop! Don't insult her! I can't get the thought of the old man out of my head! [Roars with laughter] Don't offend your fellow-beings! Suppose I were offended once in such a way that I'd remember it for the rest of my life? What then? Should I forgive? No, no!

*The Baron* [to NASTYA] You must understand that I'm not your sort. you—ah—you piece of dirt!

*Nastya* You bastard! Why—you live off me like a worm off an apple!

[The men laugh amusedly]

*Kleshtch* Fool! An apple—?

*The Baron* You can't be angry with her—she's just an ass—

*Nastya* You laugh! Liars? Don't strike you as funny, eh?

*The Actor* [morosely] Give them a good beating!

*Nastya* If I only could! [Takes a cup from the table and throws it on the floor] That's what I'd like to do to you all!

*The Tartar* Why break dishes—eh—silly girl?

*The Baron* [rising] That'll do! I'll teach her manners in half a second!

*Nastya* [running toward door] Go to hell!

*Satine* [calling after her] Hey! That's enough! Whom are you trying to frighten? What's all the row about, anyway?

*Nastya* Dogs! I hope you'll croak! Dogs! [Runs out]

*The Actor* [morosely] Amen!

*The Tartar* Allah! Mad women, these Russians! They're bold, wilful, Tartar

women aren't like that! They know the law and abide by it

*Kleshtch* She ought to be given a sound hiding!

*The Baron* The slut!

*Kleshtch* [testing the concertina] It's ready! But its owner isn't here yet—that young fellow is burning his life away.

*Satine* Care for a drink—now?

*Kleshtch* Thanks. it's time to go to bed

*Satine* Getting used to us?

*Kleshtch* [drinks, then goes to his bunk] It's all right. . . there are people everywhere—at first you don't notice it. but after a while you don't mind

[The TARTAR spreads some rags over his bunk, then kneels on them and prays]

*The Baron* [to SATINE, pointing at the TARTAR] Look!

*Satine* Stop! He's a good fellow! Leave him alone! [Roars with laughter] I feel kindly to-day—the devil alone knows the reason why.

*The Baron* You always feel kindly when you're drunk—you're even wiser at such times

*Satine* When I'm drunk? Yes—then I like everything—right—He prays? That's fine! A man may believe or not—that's his own affair—a man is free—he pays for everything himself—belief or unbelief—love—wisdom—a man pays for everything—and that's just why he's free! Man is—truth! And what is man? It's neither you nor I nor they—oh, no—it's you and they and I and the old man—and Napoleon—Mohammed—all in one! [Outlines vaguely in the air the contour of a human being] Do you understand? It's tremendous! It contains the beginning and the end of everything—everything is in man—and everything exists for him! Man alone exists—everything else is the creation of his hands and his brain! Man! It is glorious! It sounds—oh—so big! Man must be respected—not degraded with pity—but respected, respected! Let us drink to man, Baron! [Rises] It is good to feel that you are a man! I'm a convict, a murderer, a crook—granted!—When I'm out on the street people stare at me as if I were a scoundrel—they draw away from me—they look after me and often they say "You dog! You humbug! Work!" Work? And what for? to fill my belly? [Roars with

laughter] I've always despised people who worry too much about their bellies. It isn't right, Baron! It isn't! Man is loftier than that! Man stands above hunger!

*The Baron* You—reason things out. Well and good—it brings you a certain amount of consolation. Personally I'm incapable of it. I don't know how [Glances around him and then, softly, guardedly] Brother—I am afraid—at times. Do you understand? Afraid!—Because—what next?

*Satine* Rot! What's a man to be afraid of?

*The Baron* [pacing up and down] You know—as far back as I can remember, there's been a sort of fog in my brain. I was never able to understand anything. Somehow I feel embarrassed—it seems to me that all my life I've done nothing but change clothes—and why? I don't understand! I studied—I wore the uniform of the Institute for the Sons of the Nobility

but what have I learned? I don't remember! I married—I wore a frock-coat—then a dressing-gown—but I chose a disagreeable wife—and why? I don't understand. I squandered everything that I possessed—I wore some sort of a grey jacket and brick-colored trousers—but how did I happen to ruin myself? I haven't the slightest idea. . . I had a position in the Department of State. . . I wore a uniform and a cap with insignia of rank. I embezzled government funds. . . so they dressed me in a convict's garb—and later on I got into these clothes here—and it all happened as in a dream—it's funny.

*Satine* Not very! It's rather—silly!

*The Baron* Yes—silly! I think so, too. Still—wasn't I born for some sort of purpose?

*Satine* [laughing] Probably—a man is born to conceive a better man. [Shaking his head]—It's all right!

*The Baron* That she-devil Nastya! Where did she run to? I'll go and see—after all, she. [Exit, pause]

*The Actor* Tartar! [Pause] Prince! [The TARTAR looks round] Say a prayer for me.

*The Tartar* What?

*The Actor* [softly] Pray—for me!

*The Tartar* [after a silence] Pray for your own self!

*The Actor* [quickly crawls off the stove

and goes to the table, pours out a drink with shaking hands, drinks, then almost runs to passage] All over!

*Satine* Hey, proud Sicambrian! Where are you going?

[SATINE whistles. MIEDVIEDIEFF enters, dressed in a woman's flannel shirtwaist, followed by BUBNOFF. Both are slightly drunk. BUBNOFF carries a bunch of pretzels in one hand, a couple of smoked fish in the other, a bottle of vodka under one arm, another bottle in his coat pocket.]

*Miedviedieff* A camel is something like a donkey—only it has no ears.

*Bubnoff* Shut up! You're a variety of donkey yourself!

*Miedviedieff* A camel has no ears at all, at all—it hears through its nostrils.

*Bubnoff* [to SATINE] Friend! I've looked for you in all the saloons and all the cabarets! Take this bottle—my hands are full.

*Satine* Put the pretzels on the table—then you'll have one hand free—

*Bubnoff* Right! Hey—you donkey—look! Isn't he a clever fellow?

*Miedviedieff* All crooks are clever—I know! They couldn't do a thing without brains. An honest man is all right even if he's an idiot—but a crook must have brains. But, speaking about camels, you're wrong—you can ride them—they have no horns—and no teeth either.

*Bubnoff* Where's everybody? Why is there no one here? Come on out—I treat! Who's in the corner?

*Satine* How soon will you drink up everything you have? Scarecrow!

*Bubnoff* Very soon! I've very little this time. Zob—where's Zob?

*Kleshtch* [crossing to table] He isn't here.

*Bubnoff* Waughrr! Bull-dog! Br-zz-zz!—Turkey-cock! Don't bark and don't growl! Drink—make merry—and don't be sullen!—I treat everybody—Brother, I love to treat—if I were rich, I'd run a free saloon! So help me God, I would! With an orchestra and a lot of singers! Come, every one! Drink and eat—listen to the music—and rest in peace! Beggars—come, all you beggars—and enter my saloon free of charge! *Satine*—you can have half my capital—just like that!



*Satine* You better give me all you have straight away!

*Bubnoff* All my capital? Right now? Well—here's a ruble—here's twenty kopecks—five kopecks—sun-flower seeds—and that's all!

*Satine* That's spendid! It'll be safer with me—I'll gamble with it

*Miedvedieff* I'm a witness—the money was given you for safe-keeping. How much is it?

*Bubnoff* You? You're a camel—we don't need witnesses

*Alyoshka* [comes in barefoot]. Brothers, I got my feet wet!

*Bubnoff* Go on and get your throat wet—and nothing'll happen—you're a fine fellow—you sing and you play—that's all right! But it's too bad you drink—drink, little brother, is harmful, very harmful

*Alyoshka* I judge by you! Only when you're drunk do you resemble a human being  
*Kleshtch!* Is my concertina fixed? [Sings and dances]

"If my mug were not so attractive,  
My sweetheart wouldn't love me at all"

Boys, I'm frozen—it's cold

*Miedvedieff* Hm—and may I ask who's this sweetheart?

*Bubnoff* Shut up! From now on, brother, you are neither a policeman nor an uncle!

*Alyoshka* Just auntie's husband!

*Bubnoff* One of your nieces is in jail—the other one's dying

*Miedvedieff* [proudly] You he! She's not dying—she disappeared—without trace  
[SATINE roars!]

*Bubnoff* All the same, brothers—a man without nieces isn't an uncle!

*Alyoshka* Your Excellency! Listen to the drummer of the retired billygoats' brigade! [Sings]

"My sweetheart has money,  
I haven't a cent  
But I'm a cheerful,  
Merry lad!"

Oh— isn't it cold!

[Enter *Zob* From now until the final curtain men and women drift in, undress, and stretch out on the bunks, grumbling]

*Zob* Bubnoff! Why did you run off?

*Bubnoff* Come here—sit down—brother, let's sing my favorite ditty, eh?

*The Tartar* Night was made for sleep! Sing your songs in the daytime!

*Satine* Well—never mind, Prince—come here!

*The Tartar* What do you mean—never mind? There's going to be a noise—there always is when people sing!

*Bubnoff* [crossing to the TARTAR] Count—ah—I mean Prince—how's your hand? Did they cut it off?

*The Tartar* What for? We'll wait and see—perhaps it won't be necessary—a hand isn't made of iron—it won't take long to cut it off

*Zob* It's your own affair, Hassanka! You'll be good for nothing without your hand We're judged by our hands and backs—without the pride of your hand, you're no longer a human being Tobacco-carting—that's your business! Come on—have a drink of vodka—and stop worrying!

*Kvashnya* [comes in] Ah, my beloved fellow-lodgers! It's horrible outside—snow and slush—is my policeman here?

*Miedvedieff* Right here!

*Kvashnya* Wearing my blouse again? And drunk, eh? What's the idea?

*Miedvedieff* In celebration of Bubnoff's birthday—besides, it's cold

*Kvashnya* Better look out—stop fooling about and go to sleep!

*Miedvedieff* [goes to kitchen] Sleep? I can—I want to—it's time— [Exit]

*Satine* What's the matter? Why are you so strict with him?

*Kvashnya* You can't be otherwise, friend You have to be strict with his sort I took him as a partner I thought he'd be of some benefit to me—because he's a military man—and you're a rough lot—and I am a woman—and now he's turned drunkard—that won't do at all!

*Satine* You picked a good one for partner!

*Kvashnya* Couldn't get a better one You wouldn't want to live with me—you think you're too fine! And even if you did it wouldn't last more than a week you'd gamble me and all I own away at cards!

*Satine* [roars with laughter] That's true, landlady—I'd gamble

*Kvashnya* Yes, yes Alyoshka!

*Alyoshka* Here he is—I, myself!

*Kvashnya* What do you mean by gossiping about me?



*Alyoshka* I? I speak out everything—whatever my conscience tells me There, I say, is a wonderful woman! Splendid meat, fat, bones—over four hundred pounds! But brains—? Not an ounce!

*Kvashnya* You're a liar! I've a lot of brains! What do you mean by saying I beat my policeman?

*Alyoshka* I thought you did—when you pulled him by the hair!

*Kvashnya* [laughs] You fool! You aren't blind, are you? Why wash dirty linen in public? And—it hurts his feelings—that's why he took to drink

*Alyoshka* It's true, evidently, that even a chicken likes vodka [SATINE and KLESHTCH roar with laughter]

*Kvashnya* Go on—show your teeth! What sort of a man are you anyway, Alyoshka?

*Alyoshka* Oh—I am first-rate! Master of all trades! I follow my nose!

*Bubnoff* [near the TARTAR's bunk] Come on! At all events—we won't let you sleep! We'll sing all night Zob!

*Zob* Sing—? All right

*Alyoshka* And I'll play

*Satine* We'll listen!

*The Tartar* [smiling] Well—Bubnoff—you devil—bring the vodka—we'll drink—we'll have a hell of a good time! The end will come soon enough—and then we'll be dead!

*Bubnoff* Fill his glass, Satine! Zob—sit down! Ah—brothers—what does a man need after all? There, for instance, I've had a drink—and I'm happy! Zob! Start my favorite song! I'll sing—and then I'll cry . . .

*Zob* [begins to sing].

"The sun rises and sets . . ."

*Bubnoff* [joining in]

"But my prison is all dark . . ."

[Door opens quickly]

*The Baron* [on the threshold, yells]. Hey—you—come—come here! Out in the waste—in the yard over there The actor—he's hanged himself

[Silence All stare at the BARON Behind him appears NASTYA, and slowly, her eyes wide with horror, she walks to the table]

*Satine* [in a matter-of-fact voice] Damned fool—he ruined the song !

THE END

THE CHERRY ORCHARD

(VISCHEVEE SAD)

By ANTON TCHEKHOV

*Translated from the Russian by GEORGE CALDERON*

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## ANTON TCHEKHOV AND HIS PLAYS

ANTON TCHEKHOV, the author of *The Cherry Orchard*, was born in 1860 in Taganrog, in the south of Russia, studied at the University of Moscow, and in 1881 gained the degree of M.D. Early in his career he turned to writing, and gained fame as the greatest master of the short-story that Russia has produced. In 1885 he began to write plays, with varying success. After the failure of his *Sea Gull* in St. Petersburg, the Moscow Art Theatre took over the play and presented it successfully, and then began Tchekhov's association with that famous organization. The two became so intimately connected that it is commonly supposed that each "made" the other. The truth is that, although the Moscow Art Theatre made the first productions of Tchekhov's *Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard*, both the dramatist and the theatre were celebrated and well-established before they came together at all. Toward the close of his life Tchekhov became an actual shareholder in the company, and married Olga Knipper, one of the actresses. Tchekhov suffered from tuberculosis, and spent his last years in the mild climate of the Crimea, where he died in 1904.

Tchekhov wrote altogether fourteen plays, nine of which are of one act only. Of his five long plays the indubitable masterpieces are *The Three Sisters*, *The Sea Gull*, and *The Cherry Orchard*. In technique he is primarily a naturalist, but he informs his naturalism with a delicate and unobtrusive symbolism. With Tchekhov the symbol is not an external ornament, deliberately applied from the outside, but an essential ingredient, a natural growth out of action, character, and environment. It is completely fused with these other elements, yet it dominates and transcends them. It is at the same time both an interpretation of the fact and the fact itself. Like Schmitzler, also a physician, Tchekhov carries into his plays something of the psychological insight acquired in his practice, to this fact he himself testifies. And, again like Schmitzler, he shows a tolerant sympathy for all kinds of men and all their vagaries. He seems less interested in isolated individuals than in individuals closely associated in a group. This group is composed, not of the proletariat, as is usual in the naturalistic plays of Hauptmann, but of the bourgeoisie or of the gentry of the country or the town. And the group, however composed, becomes, by some astonishing skill, possessed of such organic unity that the whole seems like a many-sided individual.

At first Tchekhov's plays look almost formless and incoherent; but actually they are of a strong fabric, closely and artfully woven, with every effect carefully planned, and with every line of the apparently artless speech contributing to the total impression. Here is, indeed, the art that conceals art and surpasses art—"the art itself is nature." The final result is a sense of reality attained in like measure by scarcely another modern dramatist.

*The Cherry Orchard* is characteristic of Tchekhov's work in general. It pictures a complete group, this time composed of persons of various types and social ranks, every member of which is as carefully characterized as if he were the sole protagonist of the play, and all disposed in the picture according to the way and the degree in which he expresses the dominant idea. Simply as an illustration of the relation of social classes in Russia the play is undoubtedly out of date, it relies for its appeal upon its humanity. Peculiarly Russian, its persons are so free from inhibitions, so naïve, as often to seem incredibly childlike to western eyes, but those of their traits that seem distinctively national are so utterly merged in universal qualities that they become generally comprehensible.

*The Cherry Orchard* was written in 1904 and in that same year was presented by the Moscow Art Theatre. Its first performance in English was in 1911, in London, by the Stage Society. The Moscow Art Theatre included it in their repertory on their first American tour, which opened in New York in December, 1923. Since then it has been repeatedly performed in English in the United States.

## CHARACTERS

MADAME RANÉVSKY, *a landowner*  
ÁNYA, *her daughter, aged seventeen*  
BARBARA, *her adopted daughter, aged twenty-seven*  
LEONÍD GÁYEF, *brother of Madame Ranévsky*  
LOPÁKHIN, *a merchant*  
PETER TROPHÍMOF, *a student*  
SIMEÓNOF-PÍSHTCHIK, *a landowner*  
CHARLOTTE, *a governess*  
ÉPHIKHÓDOF, *a clerk*  
DUNYÁSHA, *a housemaid*  
FIRS, *man-servant, aged eighty-seven*  
YÁSHA, *a young man-servant*  
TRAMP  
*Stationmaster, Post-Office Official, Guests, Servants, etc.*

*The action takes place on Madame Ranévsky's estate in Russia about the year 1900.*

# THE CHERRY ORCHARD

## ACT ONE

*A room which is still called the nursery One door leads to ANYA'S room Dawn, the sun will soon rise It is already May, the cherry trees are in blossom, but it is cold in the garden and there is a morning frost The windows are closed*

*Enter DUNYÁSHA with a candle, and LOPÁKHIN with a book in his hand*

*Lopákhin* So the train has come in, thank Heaven What is the time?

*Dunyásha* Nearly two [*Putting the candle out*] It is light already

*Lopákhin* How late is the train? A couple of hours at least [*Yawning and stretching*] What do you think of me? A fine fool I have made of myself I came on purpose to meet them at the station and then I went and fell asleep, fell asleep as I sat in my chair What a nuisance it is! You might have woke me up anyway

*Dunyásha* I thought that you had gone [*She listens*] That sounds like them driving up

*Lopákhin* [*listening*] No, they have got to get the luggage out and all that [*A pause*] Madame Ranévsky has been five years abroad I wonder what she has become like What a splendid creature she is! So easy and simple in her ways I remember when I was a youngster of fifteen my old father (he used to keep the shop here in the village then) struck me in the face with his fist and set my nose bleeding We had come, for some reason or other, I forget what, into the courtyard, and he had been drinking Madame Ranévsky—I remember it like yesterday, still a young girl, and oh, so slender—brought me to the washstand, here, in this very room, in the nursery “Don’t cry, little peasant,” she said, “it’ll mend by your wedding”! [*A pause*] “Little peasant”! My father, it is true, was a peasant, and here am I in a white waistcoat and brown boots, a silk purse out of

<sup>1</sup>It’ll mend by your wedding a proverbial phrase.

a sow’s ear, as you might say, just turned rich, with heaps of money, but when you come to look at it, still a peasant of the peasants [*Turning over the pages of the book*] Here’s this book that I was reading and didn’t understand a word of it, I just sat reading and fell asleep

*Dunyásha* The dogs never slept all night, they knew that their master and mistress were coming

*Lopákhin* What’s the matter with you, Dunyásha? You’re all

*Dunyásha* My hands are trembling, I feel quite faint

*Lopákhin* You are too refined, Dunyásha, that’s what it is You dress yourself like a young lady, and look at your hair! You ought not to do it, you ought to remember your place

*[Enter EPHIKHÓDOR with a nosegay He is dressed in a short jacket and brightly polished boots which squeak noisily As he comes in he drops the nosegay]*

*Ephikhódor* [*picking it up*] The gardener has sent this, he says it is to go in the dining-room [*Handing it to DUNYÁSHA*]

*Lopákhin* And bring me some quass

*Dunyásha* Yes, sir [*Exit DUNYÁSHA*]

*Ephikhódor* There’s a frost this morning, three degrees, and the cherry trees all in blossom I can’t say I think much of our climate, [*sighing*] that is impossible Our climate is not adapted to contribute, and I should like to add, with your permission, that only two days ago I bought myself a new pair of boots, and I venture to assure you they do squeak beyond all bearing What am I to grease them with?

*Lopákhin* Get out, I’m tired of you

*Ephikhódor* Every day some misfortune happens to me, but do I grumble? No, I am used to it, I can afford to smile

*[Enter DUNYÁSHA, and hands a glass of quass to LOPÁKHIN]*

*Ephikhódor* I must be going [*He knocks against a chair, which falls to the ground*] There you are! [*In a voice of triumph*] You see, if I may venture on the expression, the

sort of incidents *inter alia* It really is astonishing [*Exit EPHIKHÓDOF*]

*Dunyáša* To tell you the truth, Yermolái Aleáyitch, Ephikhódof has made me a proposal

*Lopákhin* Hmph!

*Dunyáša* I hardly know what to do He is such a well-behaved young man, only so often when he talks one doesn't know what he means It is all so nice and full of good feeling, but you can't make out what it means I fancy I am rather fond of him. He adores me passionately He is a most unfortunate man, every day something seems to happen to him They call him "Twenty-two misfortunes," that's his nickname

*Lopákhin* [*listening*] There, surely that is them coming!

*Dunyáša* They're coming! Oh, what is the matter with me? I am all turning cold

*Lopákhin* Yes, there they are, and no mistake Let's go and meet them Will she know me again, I wonder? It is five years since we met

*Dunyáša* I am going to faint! . . I am going to faint!

[*Two carriages are heard driving up to the house* *LOPÁKHIN* and *DUNYÁSHA* *exit quickly* The stage remains empty A hubbub begins in the neighboring rooms *FIRS* walks hastily across the stage, leaning on a walking-stick He has been to meet them at the station He is wearing an old-fashioned livery and a tall hat, he mumbles something to himself, but not a word is audible The noise behind the scenes grows louder and louder A voice says "Let's go this way" *Enter MADAME RANÉVSKY, ÁNYA, CHARLOTTE, leading a little dog on a chain, all dressed in traveling-dresses, Barbara in great-coat, with a kerchief over her head, GÁYEF, SIMEÓNOF-PÍSHTCHIK, LOPÁKHIN, DUNYÁSHA, carrying parcel and umbrella, servants with luggage, all cross the stage*]

*Ánya* Come through this way Do you remember what room this is, mamma?

*Madame Ranévsky* [*joyfully, through her tears*] The nursery

*Barbara* How cold it is My hands are simply frozen. [*To MADAME RANÉVSKY*] Your two rooms, the white room and the

violet room, are just the same as they were, mamma

*Madame Ranévsky* My nursery, my dear, beautiful nursery! This is where I used to sleep when I was a little girl [*Crying*] I am like a little girl still [*Kissing GÁYEF and BARBARA and then GÁYEF again*] Barbara has not altered a bit, she is just like a nun, and I knew Dunyáša at once [*Kissing DUNYÁSHA*]

*Gáyef* Your train was two hours late What do you think of that? There's punctuality for you!

*Charlotte* [*to SIMEÓNOF-PÍSHTCHIK*] My little dog eats nuts

*Pishtchik* [*astonished*] You don't say so! Well, I never!

[*Exeunt all but ÁNYA and DUNYÁSHA.*]

*Dunyáša* At last you've come! [*She takes off ÁNYA's overcoat and hat*]

*Ánya* I have not slept for four nights on the journey I am frozen to death

*Dunyáša* It was Lent when you went away There was snow on the ground, it was freezing, but now! Oh, my dear! [*Laughing and kissing her*] How I have waited for you, my joy, my light! Oh, I must tell you something at once, I cannot wait another minute

*Ánya* [*without interest*] What, again?

*Dunyáša* Ephikhódof, the clerk, proposed to me in Easter Week

*Ánya* Same old story [*Putting her hair straight*] All my hairpins have dropped out [*She is very tired, staggering with fatigue*]

*Dunyáša* I hardly know what to think of it He loves me! Oh, how he loves me!

*Ánya* [*looking into her bedroom, affectionately*] My room, my windows, just as if I had never gone away! I am at home again! When I wake up in the morning I shall run out into the garden Oh, if only I could get to sleep!

I have not slept the whole journey from Paris, I was so nervous and anxious

*Dunyáša* Monsieur Trophimof arrived the day before yesterday

*Ánya* [*joyfully*] Peter?

*Dunyáša* He is sleeping outside in the bath-house, he is living there He was afraid he might be in the way [*Looking at her watch*] I'd like to go and wake him, only Mamzelle Barbara told me not to "Mind you don't wake him," she said

[*Enter BARBARA with bunch of keys hanging from her girdle*]

Barbara Duniyásha, go and get some coffee, quick Mamma wants some coffee

Duniyásha In a minute! *[Exit DUNIYASHA]*

Barbara Well, thank Heaven, you have come Here you are at home again *[Carcassing her]* My little darling is back! My pretty one is back!

Ánya What I've had to go through!

Barbara I can believe you

Ánya I left here in Holy Week How cold it was! Charlotte would talk the whole way and keep doing conjuring tricks What on earth made you tie Charlotte round my neck?

Barbara Well, you couldn't travel alone, my pet At seventeen!

Ánya When we got to Paris, it was so cold! There was snow on the ground I can't talk French a bit Mamma was on the fifth floor of a big house When I arrived there were a lot of Frenchmen with her, and ladies, and an old Catholic priest with a book, and it was very uncomfortable and full of tobacco smoke I suddenly felt so sorry for mamma, oh, so sorry! I took her head in my arms and squeezed it and could not let it go, and then mamma kept kissing me and crying

Barbara *[crying]* Don't go on, don't go on!

Ánya She's sold her villa near Mentone already She's nothing left, absolutely nothing, and I hadn't a farthing either We only just managed to get home And mamma won't understand! We get out at a station to have some dinner, and she asks for all the most expensive things and gives the waiters a florin each for a tip, and Charlotte does the same And Yásha wanted his portion, too It was too awful! Yásha is mamma's new manservant We have brought him back with us.

Barbara. I've seen the rascal

Ánya Come, tell me all about everything! Has the interest on the mortgage been paid?

Barbara. How could it be?

Ánya Oh, dear! Oh, dear!

Barbara. The property will be sold in August

Ánya Oh, dear! Oh, dear!

Lopákhin *[looking in at the door and mooing like a cow]* Moo-ool *[He goes away again]*

Barbara *[laughing through her tears, and shaking her fist at the door]* Oh, I should like to give him one!

Ánya *[embracing BARBARA softly]* Barbara, has he proposed to you?

*[BARBARA shakes her head]*

Ánya And yet I am sure he loves you. Why don't you come to an understanding? What are you waiting for?

Barbara I don't think anything will come of it He has so much to do, he can't be bothered with me, he hardly takes any notice Confound the man, I can't bear to see him! Every one talks about our marriage, every one congratulates me, but, as a matter of fact, there is nothing in it, it's all a dream *[Changing her tone]* You've got on a brooch like a bee

Ánya *[sadly]* Mamma bought it for me *[Going into her room, talking gayly, like a child]* When I was in Paris, I went up in a balloon!

Barbara How glad I am you are back, my little pet! my pretty one!

*[DUNIYASHA has already returned with a coffee-pot and begins to prepare the coffee]*

Barbara *[standing by the door]* I trudge about all day looking after things, and I think and think What are we to do? If only we could marry you to some rich man it would be a load off my mind I would go into a retreat, and then to Kief, to Moscow, I would tramp about from one holy place to another, always tramping and tramping What bliss!

Ánya The birds are singing in the garden What time is it now?

Barbara It must be past two It is time to go to bed, my darling *[Following ÁNYA into her room]* What bliss!

*[Enter YÁSHA with a shawl and a traveling-bag]*

Yásha *[crossing the stage, delicately]* May I pass this way, mademoiselle?

Duniyásha One would hardly know you, Yásha How you've changed abroad!

Yásha Ahem! And who may you be?

Duniyásha When you left here I was a little thing like that *[indicating with her hand]* My name is Duniyásha, Theodore Kozoyédof's daughter Don't you remember me?

Yásha Ahem! You little cucumber!

*[He looks round cautiously, then embraces her She screams and drops a saucer Exit YÁSHA hastily]*

Barbara *[in the doorway, crossly]* What's all this?

Duniyásha *[crying]* I've broken a saucer

Barbara. Well, it brings luck

*[Enter ÁNYA from her room]*

Ánya. We must tell mamma that Peter's here

Barbara I've told them not to wake him.



Ánya [*thoughtfully*] It's just six years since papa died. And only a month afterwards poor little Grisha was drowned in the river, my pretty little brother, only seven years old! It was too much for mamma, she ran away, ran away without looking back [*Shuddering*] How well I can understand her, if only she knew! [*A pause*] Peter Trophimof was Grisha's tutor, he might remind her [*Enter FIRS in long coat and white waistcoat*]

Firs [*going over to the coffee-pot, anxiously*] My mistress is going to take coffee here [*Putting on white gloves*] Is the coffee ready? [*Sternly, to DUNYÁSHA*] Here, girl, where's the cream?

Dunyásha Oh, dear! oh, dear! [*Exit DUNYÁSHA hastily*]

Firs [*bustling about the coffee-pot*] Ah, you . . . job-lot!<sup>1</sup> [*Mumbling to himself*] She's come back from Paris. The master went to Paris once in a post-chaise [*Laughing*]

Barbara What is it, Firs?

Firs I beg your pardon? [*Joyfully*] My mistress has come home, at last I've seen her. Now I'm ready to die.

[*He cries with joy. Enter MADAME RANÉVSKY, LOPÁKHIN, GÁYEF, and PÍSHTCHIK, PÍSHTCHIK in Russian breeches and coat of fine cloth. GÁYEF as he enters makes gestures as if playing billiards*]

Madame Ranévsky What was the expression? Let me see. "I'll put the red in the corner pocket, double into the middle—"

Gáyef I'll chip the red in the right-hand top. Once upon a time, Lyuba, when we were children, we used to sleep here side by side in two little cots, and now I'm fifty-one, and can't bring myself to believe it.

Lopákhin Yes, time flies.

Gáyef Who's that?

Lopákhin Time flies, I say.

Gáyef There's a smell of patchouli!

Ánya I am going to bed. Good-night, mamma [*Kissing her mother*]

Madame Ranévsky My beloved little girl! [*Kissing her hands*] Are you glad you're home again? I can't come to my right senses.

Ánya Good-night, uncle.

Gáyef [*kissing her face and hands*] God bless you, little Ánya. How like your mother you

are! [*To MADAME RANÉVSKY*] You were just such another girl at her age, Lyuba.

[ÁNYA shakes hands with LOPÁKHIN and SIMEÓNOF-PÍSHTCHIK, and exit, shutting her bedroom door behind her]

Madame Ranévsky She's very, very tired. Píshtchik It must have been a long journey.

Barbara [*To LOPÁKHIN and PÍSHTCHIK*] Well, gentlemen, it's past two, time you were off.

Madame Ranévsky [*laughing*] You haven't changed a bit, Barbara! [*Drawing her to herself and kissing her*] I'll just finish my coffee, then we'll all go. [*Firs puts a footstool under her feet*] Thank you, friend. I'm used to my coffee. I drink it day and night. Thank you, you dear old man. [*Kissing FIRS*]

Barbara I'll go and see if they've got all the luggage. [*Exit BARBARA*]

Madame Ranévsky Can it be me that's sitting here? [*Laughing*] I want to jump and wave my arms about. [*Pausing and covering her face*] Surely I must be dreaming! God knows I love my country. I love it tenderly. I couldn't see out of the window from the train, I was crying so. [*Crying*] However, I must drink my coffee. Thank you, Firs, thank you, you dear old man. I'm so glad to find you still alive.

Firs The day before yesterday.

Gáyef He's hard of hearing.

Lopákhin I've got to be off for Kharkof by the five-o'clock train. Such a nuisance! I wanted to stay and look at you and talk to you. You're as splendid as you always were. Píshtchik [*sighing heavily*] Handsomer than ever and dressed like a Parisian. Perish my wagon and all its wheels!

Lopákhin Your brother, Leoníd Andréyitch, says I'm a snob, a money-grubber. He can say what he likes. I don't care a hang. Only I want you to believe in me as you used to, I want your wonderful, touching eyes to look at me as they used to. Merciful God in heaven! My father was your father's serf, and your grandfather's serf before him, but you, you did so much for me in the old days that I've forgotten everything, and I love you like a sister—more than a sister.

Madame Ranévsky I can't sit still! I can't do it! [*Jumping up and walking about in great agitation*] This happiness is more than I can bear. Laugh at me! I am a fool! [*Kissing a*

<sup>1</sup> Job-lot. In the original, *nedotápn*, a word invented by Tchekhov, and now established as classical. Derived from *ne*, not, and *dotyápat*, to finish chopping.

cupboard] My darling old cupboard! [*Caressing a table*] My dear little table!

*Gáyef* Nurse is dead since you went away  
*Madame Ranévsky* [*sitting down and drinking coffee*] Yes, Heaven rest her soul They wrote and told me

*Gáyef* And Anastási is dead Squint-eyed Peter has left us and works in the town at the Police Inspector's now

[*GÁYEF takes out a box of sugar candy from his pocket, and begins to eat it*]

*Pishtchik* My daughter Dáshenka sent her compliments

*Lopákhin* I long to say something charming and delightful to you [*Looking at his watch*] I'm just off, there's no time to talk Well, yes, I'll put it in two or three words You know that your cherry orchard is going to be sold to pay the mortgage the sale is fixed for the 22d of August, but don't you be uneasy, my dear lady, sleep peacefully, there's a way out of it This is my plan Listen to me carefully Your property is only fifteen miles from the town, the railway runs close beside it, and if only you will cut up the cherry orchard and the land along the river into building lots and let it off on lease for villas, you will get at least two thousand five hundred pounds a year out of it

*Gáyef* Come, Come! What rubbish you're talking!

*Madame Ranévsky* I don't quite understand what you mean, Yermolái Alexéyitch

*Lopákhin* You will get a pound a year at least for every acre from the tenants, and if you advertise the thing at once, I am ready to bet whatever you like, by the autumn you won't have a clod of that earth left on your hands It'll all be snapped up In two words, I congratulate you, you are saved It's a first-class site, with a good deep river Only, of course you will have to put it in order and clear the ground, you will have to pull down all the old buildings—this house, for instance, which is no longer fit for anything, you'll have to cut down the cherry orchard.

*Madame Ranévsky* Cut down the cherry orchard! Excuse me, but you don't know what you are talking about If there is one thing that's interesting, remarkable in fact, in the whole province, it's our cherry orchard.

*Lopákhin* There's nothing remarkable about the orchard except that it's a very big one It only bears once every two years, and

then you don't know what to do with the fruit Nobody wants to buy it.

*Gáyef* Our cherry orchard is mentioned in Andréyevsky's Encyclopædia

*Lopákhin* [*looking at his watch*] If we don't make up our minds or think of any way, on the 22d of August the cherry orchard and the whole property will be sold by auction Come, make up your mind! There's no other way out of it, I swear—absolutely none

*Firs* In the old days, forty or fifty years ago, they used to dry the cherries and soak 'em and pickle 'em, and make jam of 'em, and the dried cherries .

*Gáyef* Shut up, Firs

*Firs* The dried cherries used to be sent in wagons to Moscow and Kharkof A heap of money! The dried cherries were soft and juicy and sweet and sweet-smelling then They knew some way in those days

*Madame Ranévsky* And why don't they do it now?

*Firs* They've forgotten Nobody remembers how to do it

*Pishtchik* [*to MADAME RANÉVSKY*] What about Paris? How did you get on? Did you eat frogs?

*Madame Ranévsky* Crocodiles

*Pishtchik* You don't say so! Well, I never!

*Lopákhin* Until a little while ago there was nothing but gentry and peasants in the villages, but now villa residents have made their appearance All the towns, even the little ones, are surrounded by villas now In another twenty years the villa resident will have multiplied like anything At present he only sits and drinks tea on his veranda, but it is quite likely that he will soon take to cultivating his three acres of land, and then your old cherry orchard will become fruitful, rich and happy

*Gáyef* [*angry*] What gibberish!

[*Enter BARBARA and YÁSHA*]

*Barbara* [*taking out a key and noisily unlocking an old-fashioned cupboard*] There are two telegrams for you, mamma. Here they are

*Madame Ranévsky* [*tearing them up without reading them*] They're from Paris I've done with Paris

*Gáyef* Do you know how old this cupboard is, Lyuba? A week ago I pulled out the bottom drawer and saw a date burnt in it That cupboard was made exactly a hun-

dred years ago What do you think of that, eh? We might celebrate its jubilee It's only an inanimate thing, but for all that it's a historic cupboard

*Pishtchik* [astonished]. A hundred years? Well, I never!

*Gáyef* [touching the cupboard] Yes, it's a wonderful thing . . . Beloved and venerable cupboard, honor and glory to your existence, which for more than a hundred years has been directed to the noble ideals of justice and virtue Your silent summons to profitable labor has never weakened in all these hundred years [Crying] You have upheld the courage of succeeding generations of our humankind, you have upheld faith in a better future and cherished in us ideals of goodness and social consciousness [A pause]

*Lopákhin* Yes . . .

*Madame Ranévsky* You haven't changed, Leonid.

*Gáyef* [embarrassed] Off the white in the corner, nip the red in the middle pocket!

*Lopákhin* [looking at his watch] Well, I must be off

*Yásha* [handing a box to MADAME RANÉVSKY] Perhaps you'll take your pills now

*Pishtchik* You oughtn't to take medicine, dear lady It does you neither good nor harm Give them here, my friend [He empties all the pills into the palm of his hand, blows on them, puts them in his mouth, and swallows them down with a draught of quass] There!

*Madame Ranévsky* [alarmed] Have you gone off your head?

*Pishtchik* I've taken all the pills

*Lopákhin* Greedy feller!

[Every one laughs]

*Firs* [mumbling] They were here in Easter Week and finished off a gallon of pickled gherkins

*Madame Ranévsky* What's he talking about?

*Barbara* He's been mumbling like that these three years We've got used to it

*Yásha* Advancing age

[CHARLOTTE crosses in a white frock, very thin, tightly laced, with a lorgette at her waist]

*Lopákhin* Excuse me, Charlotte Ivánovna, I've not paid my respects to you yet [He prepares to kiss her hand]

*Charlotte* [drawing her hand away] If one allows you to kiss one's hand, you will want

to kiss one's elbow next, and then one's shoulder

*Lopákhin* I'm having no luck to-day. [All laugh] Charlotte Ivánovna, do us a conjuring trick

*Madame Ranévsky* Charlotte, do do us a conjuring trick

*Charlotte* No, thank you I'm going to bed [Exit CHARLOTTE]

*Lopákhin* We shall meet again in three weeks [Kissing MADAME RANÉVSKY's hand] Meanwhile, good-bye I must be off [To GÁYEF] So-long [Kissing PÍSHTCHIK] Ta-ta [Shaking hands with BARBARA, then with FIRS and YÁSHA] I hate having to go [To MADAME RANÉVSKY] If you make up your mind about the villas, let me know, and I'll raise you five thousand pounds at once Think it over seriously

*Barbara* [angrily] For Heaven's sake, do go!

*Lopákhin* I'm going, I'm going

[Exit LOPÁKHIN]

*Gáyef* Snob! . . . However, pardon! Barbara's going to marry him, he's Barbara's young man

*Barbara* You talk too much, uncle

*Madame Ranévsky* Why, Barbara, I shall be very glad He's a nice man

*Pishtchik* Not a doubt of it . . . A most worthy individual My Dáshenka, she says . . . oh, she says lots of things [Snoring and waking up again at once] By the by, dear lady, can you lend me twenty-five pounds? I've got to pay the interest on my mortgage to-morrow

*Barbara* [alarmed] We can't! We can't!

*Madame Ranévsky* It really is a fact that I haven't any money

*Pishtchik* I'll find it somewhere [Laughing] I never lose hope Last time I thought, "Now I really am done for, I'm a ruined man," when behold, they ran a railway over my land and paid me compensation And so it'll be again, something will happen, if not to-day, then to-morrow Dáshenka may win the twenty-thousand-pound prize, she's got a ticket in the lottery

*Madame Ranévsky* The coffee's finished Let's go to bed

*Firs* [brushing GÁYEF's clothes, admonishingly] You've put on the wrong trousers again Whatever am I to do with you?

*Barbara* [softly] Ánya is asleep [She opens the window quietly] The sun's up already; it

isn't cold now Look, mamma, how lovely the trees are Heavens! what a sweet air! The starlings are singing!

*Gáyef* [opening the other window] The orchard is all white. You've not forgotten it, Lyuba? This long avenue going straight on, straight on, like a ribbon between the trees? It shines like silver on moonlight nights Do you remember? You've not forgotten?

*Madame Ranévsky* [looking out into the garden] Oh, my childhood, my pure and happy childhood! I used to sleep in this nursery I used to look out from here into the garden Happiness awoke with me every morning, and the orchard was just the same then as it is now, nothing is altered [Laughing with joy] It is all white, all white! Oh, my cherry orchard! After the dark and stormy autumn and the frosts of winter you are young again and full of happiness, the angels of heaven have not abandoned you Oh! if only I could free my neck and shoulders from the stone that weighs them down! If only I could forget my past!

*Gáyef* Yes, and this orchard will be sold to pay our debts, however impossible it may seem.

*Madame Ranévsky* Look! There's mamma walking in the orchard in a white frock! [Laughing with joy] There she is!

*Gáyef*. Where?

*Barbara* Heaven help you!

*Madame Ranévsky* There's no one there really It only looked like it, there on the right where the path turns down to the summer-house, there's a white tree that leans over and looks like a woman

[Enter TROPHIMOF in a shabby student uniform and spectacles]

*Madame Ranévsky* What a wonderful orchard, with its white masses of blossom and the blue sky above!

*Trophimof* Lyubóf Andréyevna! [She looks around at him] I only want to say, "How do you do," and go away at once [Kissing her hand eagerly] I was told to wait till the morning, but I hadn't the patience

[MADAME RANÉVSKY looks at him in astonishment]

*Barbara* [crying] This is Peter Trophimof

*Trophimof* Peter Trophimof, I was Grisha's tutor, you know Have I really altered so much?

[MADAME RANÉVSKY embraces him and cries softly]

*Gáyef* Come, come, that's enough, Lyuba!  
*Barbara* [crying] I told you to wait till tomorrow, you know, Peter

*Madame Ranévsky* My little Grisha! My little boy! Grisha . . my son

*Barbara* It can't be helped, mamma It was the will of God

*Trophimof* [gently, crying] There, there!

*Madame Ranévsky* [crying] He was drowned My little boy was drowned Why? What was the use of that, my dear? [In a softer voice] Ánya's asleep in there, and I am speaking so loud, and making a noise . But tell me, Peter, why have you grown so ugly? Why have you grown so old?

*Trophimof* An old woman in the train called me a "mouldy gentleman"

*Madame Ranévsky* You were quite a boy then, a dear little student, and now your hair's going and you wear spectacles Are you really still a student? [Going toward the door]

*Trophimof* Yes, I expect I shall be a perpetual student

*Madame Ranévsky* [kissing her brother and then BARBARA] Well, go to bed You've grown old too, Leoníd

*Pishtchik* [following her] Yes, yes, time for bed Oh, oh, my gout! I'll stay the night here Don't forget, Lyubóf Andréyevna, my angel, to-morrow morning twenty-five

*Gáyef* He's still on the same string

*Pishtchik* Twenty-five to pay the interest on my mortgage

*Madame Ranévsky* I haven't any money, my friend

*Pishtchik* I'll pay you back, dear lady It's a trifling sum

*Madame Ranévsky* Well, well, Leoníd will give it you Let him have it, Leoníd

*Gáyef* [ironical] I'll give it him right enough! Hold your pocket wide!

*Madame Ranévsky* It can't be helped He needs it He'll pay it back

[Exit MADAME RANÉVSKY, TROPHIMOF, PISHTCHIK, and FIRST GÁYEF, BARBARA, and YÁSHA remain]

*Gáyef* My sister hasn't lost her old habit of scattering the money [To YÁSHA] Go away, my lad! You smell of chicken

*Yásha* [laughing] You're just the same as you always were, Leoníd Andréyevitch!

*Gáyef* Who's that? [To BARBARA.] What does he say?

<sup>1</sup> Hold your pocket wide. a proverbial piece of irony

*Barbara* [to YÁSHA] Your mother's come up from the village. She's been waiting for you since yesterday in the servants' hall. She wants to see you.

*Yásha* What a nuisance she is!

*Barbara* You wicked, unnatural son!

*Yásha* Well, what do I want with her? She might just as well have waited till tomorrow. [Exit YÁSHA]

*Barbara* Mamma is just like she used to be, she hasn't changed a bit. If she had her way, she'd give away everything she has.

*Gáyef* Yes. [A pause] If people recommend very many cures for an illness, that means that the illness is incurable. I think and think, I batter my brains, I know of many remedies, very many, and that means really that there is none. How nice it would be to get a fortune left one by somebody! How nice it would be if Ánya could marry a very rich man! How nice it would be to go to Yaroslav and try my luck with my aunt the Countess. My aunt is very, very rich, you know.

*Barbara* [crying softly] If only God would help us!

*Gáyef* Don't howl! My aunt is very rich, but she does not like us. In the first place, my sister married a solicitor, not a nobleman. [ÁNYA appears in the doorway] She married a man who was not a nobleman, and it's no good pretending that she has led a virtuous life. She's a dear, kind, charming creature, and I love her very much, but whatever mitigating circumstances one may find for her, there's no getting round it that she's a sinful woman. You can see it in her every gesture.

*Barbara* [whispering] Ánya is standing in the door!

*Gáyef* Who's that? [A pause] It's very odd, something's got into my right eye. I can't see properly out of it. Last Thursday when I was down at the District Court.

[ÁNYA comes down]

*Barbara* Why aren't you asleep, Ánya?

*Ánya* I can't sleep. It's no good trying.

*Gáyef* My little pet! [Kissing ÁNYA's hands and face] My little girl! [Crying] You're not my niece, you're my angel, you're my everything. Trust me, trust me.

*Ánya* I do trust you, uncle. Every one loves you, every one respects you, but dear, dear uncle, you ought to hold your tongue, only to hold your tongue. What were you saying just now about mamma?—about your

own sister? What was the good of saying that?

*Gáyef* Yes, yes. [Covering his face with her hand] You're quite right, it was awful of me! Lord, Lord! Save me from myself! And a little while ago I made a speech over a cupboard. What a stupid thing to do! As soon as I had done it, I knew it was stupid.

*Barbara* Yes, really, uncle. You ought to hold your tongue. Say nothing, that's all that's wanted.

*Ánya* If only you would hold your tongue, you'd be so much happier!

*Gáyef* I will! I will! [Kissing ÁNYA's and BARBARA's hands] I'll hold my tongue. But there's one thing I must say, it's business. Last Thursday, when I was down at the District Court, a lot of us were there together, we began to talk about this and that, one thing and another, and it seems I could arrange a loan on note of hand to pay the interest into the bank.

*Barbara* If only Heaven would help us!

*Gáyef* I'll go in on Tuesday and talk it over again. [To BARBARA.] Don't howl! [To ÁNYA.] Your mamma shall have a talk with Lopákhin. Of course he won't refuse her. And as soon as you are rested you must go to see your grandmother, the Countess, at Yaroslav. We'll operate from three points, and the trick is done. We'll pay the interest, I'm certain of it. [Taking sugar candy] I swear on my honor, or whatever you will, the property shall not be sold. [Excitedly] I swear by my hope of eternal happiness! There's my hand on it. Call me a base, dishonorable man if I let it go to auction. I swear by my whole being!

*Ánya* [calm again and happy] What a dear you are, uncle, and how clever! [Embraces him] Now I'm easy again. I'm easy again! I'm happy!

[Enter FIRS]

*Firs* [reproachfully] Leoníd Andréyevitch, have you no fear of God? When are you going to bed?

*Gáyef* I'm just off—just off. You get along, Firs. I'll undress myself all right. Come, children, by-bye! Details to-morrow, but now let's go to bed. [Kissing ÁNYA and BARBARA] I'm a good Liberal, a man of the eighties. People abuse the eighties, but I think that I may say I've suffered something for my convictions in my time. It's not for nothing that the peasants love me. We ought

to know the peasants, we ought to know with what

*Anya* You're at it again, uncle!

*Barbara* Why don't you hold your tongue, uncle?

*Firs* [angrily] Leonid Andréyevitch!

*Góyef* I'm coming, I'm coming. Now go to bed. Off two cushions in the middle pocket! I start another life! [Exit, with Firs hobbling after him]

*Anya* Now my mind is at rest. I don't want to go to Yaroslav, I don't like grand-mamma, but my mind is at rest, thanks to Uncle Leonid. [She sits down]

*Barbara* Time for bed. I'm off. Whilst you were away there's been a scandal. You know that nobody lives in the old servants' quarters, except the old people, Ephum, Pauline, Evstignéy, and old Karp. Well, they took to having in all sorts of queer fish to sleep there with them. I didn't say a word. But at last I heard they had spread a report that I had given orders that they were to have nothing but peas to eat, out of stinginess, you understand? It was all Evstignéy's doing. "Very well," I said to myself, "you wait a bit." So I sent for Evstignéy. [Yawning] He comes. "Now then, Evstignéy," I said, "you old imbecile, how do you dare?" [Looking at *Anya*] *Anya*, *Anya*! [A pause] She's asleep. [Taking *Anya*'s arm] Let's go to bed. Come along. [Leading her away] Sleep on, my little one! Come along, come along! [They go towards *Anya*'s room. In the distance beyond the orchard a shepherd plays his pipe. *Trophimof* crosses the stage and, seeing *Barbara* and *Anya*, stops] 'Sh! She's asleep, she's asleep! Come along, my love.

*Anya* [drowsily] I'm so tired! Listen to the bells! Uncle, dear uncle! Mamma! Uncle!

*Barbara* Come along, my love! Come along.

[Exeunt *Barbara* and *Anya* to the bedroom]

*Trophimof* [with emotion] My sunshine! My spring!

## ACT TWO

*In the open fields, an old crooked half-ruined shrine. Near it a well, big stones, apparently old tombstones, an old bench. Road to the estate beyond. On one side rise dark poplar trees. Beyond them begins the cherry orchard. In the*

*distance a row of telegraph poles, and, far away on the horizon, the dim outlines of a big town, visible only in fine, clear weather. It is near sunset.*

*CHARLOTTE, YÁSHA, and DUNYÁSHA sit on the bench. EPHUMHÓDOS stands by them and plays on a guitar, they meditate. CHARLOTTE wears an old peaked cap.<sup>1</sup> She has taken a gun from off her shoulders and is mending the buckle of the strap.*

*Charlotte* [thoughtfully] I have no proper passport. I don't know how old I am, I always feel I am still young. When I was a little girl my father and mother used to go about from one country fair to another, giving performances, and very good ones, too. I used to do the *salto mortale* and all sorts of tricks. When papa and mamma died, an old German lady adopted me and educated me. Good! When I grew up I became a governess. But where I come from and who I am, I haven't a notion. Who my parents were—very likely they weren't married—I don't know. [Taking a cucumber from her pocket and beginning to eat] I don't know anything about it. [A pause] I long to talk so, and I have no one to talk to, I have no friends or relations.

*Ephumhódos* [playing on the guitar and singing]

"What is the noisy world to me?

Oh, what are friends and foes?"

How sweet it is to play upon a mandolin!

*Dunyásha* That's a guitar, not a mandolin. [She looks at herself in a hand-glass and powders her face]

*Ephumhódos* For the madman who loves, it is a mandolin. [Singing]

"Oh, that my heart were cheered

By the warmth of requited love."

[YÁSHA joins in.]

*Charlotte* How badly these people do sing! Fool! Like jackals howling!

*Dunyásha* [To YÁSHA] What happiness it must be to live abroad!

*Yasha* Of course it is, I quite agree with you. [He yawns and lights a cigar]

*Ephumhódos* It stands to reason. Everything abroad has attained a certain culmination.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Furázsha, the commonest men's headgear in Russia shaped like a yachting cap.

<sup>2</sup> Culmination. This represents a similar blunder on Ephumhódos's in the original.



*Yásha.* That's right

*Ephikhódof* I am a man of cultivation, I have studied various remarkable books, but I cannot fathom the direction of my preferences, do I want to live or do I want to shoot myself, so to speak? But in order to be ready for all contingencies, I always carry a revolver in my pocket. Here it is. [*Showing revolver*]

*Charlotte* That's done. I'm off. [*Slinging the rifle over her shoulder*] You're a clever fellow, Ephikhódof, and very alarming. Women must fall madly in love with you. Brrr! [*Going*] These clever people are all so stupid, I have no one to talk to. I am always alone, always alone, I have no friends or relations, and who I am, or why I exist, is a mystery. [*Exit slowly*]

*Ephikhódof* Strictly speaking, without touching upon other matters, I must protest *inter alia* that destiny treats me with the utmost rigor, as a tempest might treat a small ship. If I labor under a misapprehension, how is it that when I woke up this morning, behold, so to speak, I perceived sitting on my chest a spider of preternatural dimensions, like that? [*Indicating with both hands*] And if I go to take a draught of quass, I am sure to find something of the most indelicate character, in the nature of a cockroach. [*A pause*] Have you read Buckle? [*A pause—To DUNYÁSHA.*] I should like to trouble you, Avdotya Fëdorovna,<sup>1</sup> for a momentary interview.

*Dunyásha* Talk away.

*Ephikhódof* I should prefer to conduct it *tête-à-tête*. [*Sighing*]

*Dunyásha* [*confused*] Very well, only first please fetch me my cloak.<sup>2</sup> It's by the cupboard. It's rather damp here.

*Ephikhódof* Very well, mademoiselle. I will go and fetch it, mademoiselle. Now I know what to do with my revolver. [*Takes his guitar and exits, playing*]

*Yásha* Twenty-two misfortunes! Between you and me, he's a stupid fellow. [*Yawning*]

*Dunyásha* Heaven help him, he'll shoot himself! [*A pause*] I have grown so nervous, I am always in a twitter. I was quite a little girl when they took me into the household, and now I have got quite disused to

<sup>1</sup> *Avdotya Fëdorovna* (the *ë* is to be pronounced like the *yach* in *yacht*) *Dunya* (diminutive *Dunyásha*), stands for *Avdotya*, formally *Evdokya*, representing the Greek *Eudoxia*.

<sup>2</sup> *Cloak*. *Talmotchka*, a diminutive of *talma*, a sort of big cape, named after the tragedian.

common life, and my hands are as white as white, like a lady's. I have grown so refined, so delicate and genteel, I am afraid of everything. I'm always frightened. And if you deceive me, Yásha, I don't know what will happen to my nerves.

*Yásha* [*kissing her*] You little cucumber! Of course every girl ought to behave herself properly, there's nothing I dislike as much as when girls aren't proper in their behavior.

*Dunyásha* I've fallen dreadfully in love with you. You're so educated, you can talk about anything! [*A pause*]

*Yásha* [*yawning*] Yes. The way I look at it is this, if a girl falls in love with anybody, then I call her immoral. [*A pause*] How pleasant it is to smoke one's cigar in the open air. [*Listening*] There's some one coming. It's the missis and the rest of 'em.

[*DUNYÁSHA embraces him hastily*] Go towards the house as if you'd just been for a bathe. Go by this path or else they'll meet you and think that I've been walking out with you. I can't stand that sort of thing.

*Dunyásha* [*coughing softly*] Your cigar has given me a headache.

[*Exit DUNYÁSHA. YÁSHA remains sitting by the shrine*]

[*Enter MADAME RANÉVSKY, GÁYEF, and LOPÁKHIN*]

*Lopákhin* You must make up your minds once and for all. Time waits for no man. The question is perfectly simple. Are you going to let off the land for villas or not? Answer in one way, yes or no? Only one word!

*Madame Ranévsky* Who's smoking horrible cigars here? [*She sits down*]

*Gáyef* How handy it is now they've built that railway. [*Sitting*] We've been into town for lunch and back again. Red in the middle! I must just go up to the house and have a game.

*Madame Ranévsky* There's no hurry.

*Lopákhin* Only one word—yes or no! [*Entreatingly*] Come, answer the question!

*Gáyef* [*yawning*] Who's that?

*Madame Ranévsky* [*looking into her purse*] I had a lot of money yesterday, but there's hardly any left now. Poor Barbara tries to save money by feeding us all on milk soup, the old people in the kitchen get nothing but peas, and yet I go squandering aimlessly. [*Dropping her purse and scattering gold coins, vexed*] There, I've dropped it all!

*Yasha.* Allow me, I'll pick it up [*Collecting the coins*]

*Madame Ranévsky* Yes, please do, Yásha! Whatever made me go into town for lunch? I hate your horrid restaurant with the organ, and the tablecloths all smelling of soap Why do you drink so much, Leonid? Why do you eat so much? Why do you talk so much? You talked too much at the restaurant again, and most unsuitably, about the seventies, and the decadents. And to whom? Fancy talking about decadents to the waiters!

*Lopákhin* Quite true

*Gáyef* [*with a gesture*] I'm incorrigible, that's plain [*Irritably to YÁSHA*] What do you keep dodging about in front of me for?

*Yásha* [*laughing*] I can't hear your voice without laughing

*Gáyef* [*To MADAME RANÉVSKY*] Either he or I .

*Madame Ranévsky* Go away, Yásha, run along

*Yásha* [*handing MADAME RANÉVSKY her purse*] I'll go at once [*Restraining his laughter with difficulty*] This very minute [*Exit*]

*Lopákhin* Derigánof, the millionaire, wants to buy your property They say he'll come to the auction himself

*Madame Ranévsky* How did you hear?

*Lopákhin* I was told so in town

*Gáyef* Our aunt at Yaroslav has promised to send something, but I don't know when, or how much

*Lopákhin* How much will she send? Ten thousand pounds? Twenty thousand pounds?

*Madame Ranévsky* Oh, come A thousand or fifteen hundred at the most

*Lopákhin* Excuse me, but in all my life I never met anybody so frivolous as you two, so crazy and unbusiness-like! I tell you in plain Russian your property is going to be sold, and you don't seem to understand what I say

*Madame Ranévsky* Well, what are we to do? Tell us what you want us to do

*Lopákhin* Don't I tell you every day? Every day I say the same thing over and over again. You must lease off the cherry orchard and the rest of the estate for villas, you must do it at once, this very moment, the auction will be on you in two twos! Try and understand Once you make up your mind there are to be villas, you can get all the money you want, and you're saved.

*Madame Ranévsky* Villas and villa residents, oh, please, it's so vulgar!

*Gáyef* I quite agree with you

*Lopákhin* I shall either cry, or scream, or faint I can't stand it! You'll be the death of me [*To GÁYEF*] You're an old woman!

*Gáyef* Who's that?

*Lopákhin* You're an old woman! [*Going*]

*Madame Ranévsky* [*frightened*] No, don't go Stay here, there's a dear! Perhaps we shall think of some way

*Lopákhin* What's the good of thinking!

*Madame Ranévsky* Please don't go, I want you At any rate, it's gay er when you're here [*A pause*] I keep expecting something to happen, as if the house were going to tumble down about our ears

*Gáyef* [*in deep abstraction*] Off the cushion on the corner, double into the middle pocket

*Madame Ranévsky* We have been very, very sinful!

*Lopákhin* You! What sins have you committed?

*Gáyef* [*eating candy*] They say I've devoured all my substance in sugar candy [*Laughing*]

*Madame Ranévsky* Oh, the sins that I have committed I've always squandered money at random like a mad-woman, I married a man who made nothing but debts My husband drank himself to death on champagne, he was a fearful drinker Then for my sins I fell in love and went off with another man, and immediately—that was my first punishment—a blow full on the head . . here, in this very river my little boy was drowned, and I went abroad, right, right away, never to come back any more, never to see this river again . I shut my eyes and ran, like a mad thing, and he came after me, pitiless and cruel I bought a villa at Mentone, because he fell ill there, and for three years I knew no rest day, or night, the sick man tormented and wore down my soul Then, last year, when my villa was sold to pay my debts, I went off to Paris, and he came and robbed me of everything, left me and took up with another woman, and I tried to poison myself

It was all so stupid, so humiliating . Then suddenly I longed to be back in Russia in my own country, with my little girl [*Wiping away her tears*] Lord, Lord, be merciful to me, forgive my sins! Do not punish me any more! [*Taking a telegram from*



her pocket ] I got this to-day from Paris  
He asks to be forgiven, begs me to go back  
[*Tearing up the telegram* ] Isn't that music  
that I hear? [*Listening* ]

Gáyef That's our famous Jewish band  
You remember? Four fiddles, a flute, and a  
double bass

Madame Ranévsky Does it still exist?  
We must make them come up sometime,  
we'll have a dance

Lopákhin [*listening* ] I don't hear anything  
[*Singing softly* ]

"The Germans for a fee will turn  
A Russ into a Frenchman "

[*Laughing* ] I saw a very funny piece at the  
theatre last night, awfully funny!

Madame Ranévsky It probably wasn't a  
bit funny You people oughtn't to go and  
see plays, you ought to try to see yourselves,  
to see what a dull life you lead, and how  
much too much you talk

Lopákhin Quite right To tell the honest  
truth, our life's an imbecile affair [*A pause* ]  
My papa was a peasant, an idiot, he under-  
stood nothing, he taught me nothing, all he  
did was to beat me, when he was drunk, with  
a walking-stick As a matter of fact I'm just  
as big a blockhead and idiot as he was I  
never did any lessons, my handwriting's  
abominable, I write so badly I'm ashamed  
before people, like a pig

Madame Ranévsky You ought to get mar-  
ried

Lopákhin Yes, that's true

Madame Ranévsky Why not marry Bar-  
bara? She's a nice girl

Lopákhin Yes

Madame Ranévsky She's a nice straight-  
forward creature, works all day, and what's  
most important, she loves you You've been  
fond of her for a long time

Lopákhin Well, why not? I'm quite will-  
ing She's a very nice girl [*A pause* ]

Gáyef I've been offered a place in a bank  
Six hundred pounds a year Do you hear?

Madame Ranévsky You in a bank! Stay  
where you are

[*Enter FIRS, carrying an overcoat* ]

Firs [*To GÁYEF* ] Put this on, please,  
master, it's getting damp

Gáyef [*putting on the coat* ] What a plague  
you are, Firs!

Firs What's the use You went off  
and never told me [*Examining his clothes* ]

Madame Ranévsky How old you've got,  
Firs!

Firs I beg your pardon?

Lopákhin She says how old you've got!

Firs I've been alive a long time When  
they found me a wife, your father wasn't  
even born yet [*Laughing* ] And when the  
Liberation came I was already chief valet  
But I wouldn't have any Liberation then, I  
stayed with the master [*A pause* ] I remember  
how happy everybody was, but why they were  
happy they didn't know themselves

Lopákhin It was fine before then Anyway  
they used to flog 'em

Firs [*mishearing him* ] I should think so!  
The peasants minded the masters, and the  
masters minded the peasants, but now it's  
all higgledy-piggledy, you can't make head or  
tail of it

Gáyef Shut up, Firs I must go into town  
again to-morrow I've been promised an  
introduction to a general who'll lend money  
on a bill

Lopákhin You'll do no good You won't  
even pay the interest, set your mind at ease  
about that

Madame Ranévsky [*to LOPÁKHIN* ] He's  
only talking nonsense There's no such gen-  
eral at all

[*Enter TROPHÍMOF, ÁNYA and BARBARA* ]

Gáyef Here come the others

Ánya Here's mamma

Madame Ranévsky [*tenderly* ] Come along,  
come along my little ones [*Embracing*  
Ánya and BARBARA ] If only you knew how  
much I love you both! Sit beside me  
there, like that [*Every one sits* ]

Lopákhin The Perpetual Student's always  
among the girls

Trophímof It's no affair of yours

Lopákhin He's nearly fifty and still a  
student

Trophímof Stop your idiotic jokes!

Lopákhin What are you losing your tem-  
per for, silly?

Trophímof Why can't you leave me alone?

Lopákhin [*laughing* ] I should like to know  
what your opinion is of me

Trophímof My opinion of you, Yermolái  
Alexéyitch, is this You're a rich man, you'll  
soon be a millionaire Just as a beast of prey  
which devours everything that comes in its  
way is necessary for the conversion of matter,  
so you are necessary, too [*All laugh* ]

Barbara Tell us something about the planets, Peter, instead

Madame Ranévsky No Let's go on with the conversation we were having yesterday.

Trophimof What about?

Gáyef About the proud man

Trophimof We had a long talk yesterday, but we didn't come to any conclusion There is something mystical in the proud man in the sense in which you use the words You may be right from your point of view, but, if we look at it simple-mindedly, what room is there for pride? Is there any sense in it, when man is so poorly constructed from the physiological point of view, when the vast majority of us are so gross and stupid and profoundly unhappy? We must give up admiring ourselves The only thing to do is to work

Gáyef We shall die all the same

Trophimof Who knows? And what does it mean, to die? Perhaps man has a hundred senses, and when he dies only the five senses that we know perish with him, and the other ninety-five remain alive

Madame Ranévsky How clever you are, Peter!

Lopákhin [*ironically*] Oh, extraordinary!

Trophimof Mankind marches forward, perfecting its strength Everything that is unattainable for us now will one day be near and clear, but we must work, we must help with all our force those who seek for truth At present only a few men work in Russia. The vast majority of the educated people that I know seek after nothing, do nothing, and are as yet incapable of work They call themselves the "Intelligentsia," they say "thou" and "thee" to the servants, they treat the peasants like animals, learn nothing, read nothing serious, do absolutely nothing, only talk about science, and understand little or nothing about art They are all serious; they all have solemn faces, they only discuss important subjects, they philosophize, but meanwhile the vast majority of us, ninety-nine per cent, live like savages, at the least thing they curse and punch people's heads, they eat like beasts and sleep in dirt and bad air, there are bugs everywhere, evil smells, damp and moral degradation It's plain that all our clever conversations are only meant to distract our own attention and other people's Show me where those crèches are, that they're always talking so much about, or those reading-rooms. They are only things

people write about in novels, they don't really exist at all Nothing exists but dirt, vulgarity, and Asiatic ways I am afraid of solemn faces, I dislike them, I am afraid of solemn conversations Let us rather hold our tongues

Lopákhin Do you know, I get up at five every morning, I work from morning till night, I am always handling my own money or other people's, and I see the sort of men there are about me One only has to begin to do anything to see how few honest and decent people there are Sometimes, as I lie awake in bed, I think "O Lord, you have given us mighty forests, boundless fields and immeasurable horizons, and, we living in their midst, ought really to be giants"

Madame Ranévsky Oh, dear, you want giants! They are all very well in fairy stories, but in real life they are rather alarming

[*ΕΡΗΚΗΔΟΦ passes at the back of the scene, playing on his guitar*]

Madame Ranévsky [*pensively*] There goes Ephikhódof

Ánya [*pensively*] There goes Ephikhódof

Gáyef The sun has set

Trophimof Yes.

Gáyef [*as if declaiming, but not loud*] O Nature, wonderful Nature, you glow with eternal light, beautiful and indifferent, you whom we call our mother, uniting in yourself both life and death, you animate and you destroy

Barbara [*entreatingly*] Uncle!

Ánya You're at it again, uncle

Trophimof You'd far better double the red into the middle pocket

Gáyef I'll hold my tongue! I'll hold my tongue!

[*They all sit pensively Silence reigns, broken only by the mumbling of old Firs Suddenly a distant sound is heard as if from the sky, the sound of a string breaking, dying away, melancholy*]

Madame Ranévsky What's that?

Lopákhin I don't know It's a lifting-tub given away somewhere away in the mines It must be a long way off

Gáyef Perhaps it's some sort of bird a heron, or something

Trophimof Or an owl

Madame Ranévsky [*shuddering*] There is something uncanny about it!

Firs The same thing happened before the

great misfortune the owl screeched and the samovar kept humming

*Gáyef* What great misfortune?

*Firs* The Liberation [A pause]

*Madame Ranévsky* Come, every one, let's go in, it's getting late [To *ÁNYA*] You've tears in your eyes What is it, little one? [Embracing her]

*Ánya* Nothing, mamma I'm all right

*Trophímov* There's some one coming

[A TRAMP appears in a torn white peaked cap and overcoat He is slightly drunk]

*Tramp.* Excuse me, but can I go through this way straight to the station?

*Gáyef* Certainly Follow this path.

*Tramp* I am uncommonly obliged to you, sir [Coughing] We're having lovely weather [Declaring] "Brother, my suffering brother"

"Come forth to the Volga Who moans?"

[To *BARBARA*] Mademoiselle, please spare a sixpence for a hungry fellow-countryman

[*BARBARA*, frightened, screams]

*Lopákhin* [angrily] There's a decency for every indecency to observe!

*Madame Ranévsky* Take this, here you are [Fumbling in her purse] I haven't any silver

Never mind, take this sovereign

*Tramp* I am uncommonly obliged to you, madam [Exit TRAMP Laughter]

*Barbara* [frightened] I'm going! I'm going! Oh, mamma, there's nothing for the servants to eat at home, and you've gone and given this man a sovereign

*Madame Ranévsky* What's to be done with your stupid old mother? I'll give you up everything I have when I get back Yermolái Alexéyitch, lend me some more money

*Lopákhin* Very good

*Madame Ranévsky* Come along, every one, it's time to go in We've settled all about your marriage between us, Barbara I wish you joy

*Barbara* [through her tears] You mustn't joke about such things, mamma

*Lopákhin* Amelia, get thee to a nunnery, go!

*Gáyef* My hands are all trembling, it's ages since I had a game of billiards

*Lopákhin* Amelia, nymphlet, in thine orisons remember me<sup>1</sup>

*Madame Ranévsky* Come along It's nearly supper-time

*Barbara* How he frightened me! My heart is simply throbbing

*Lopákhin* Allow me to remind you, the cherry orchard is to be sold on the 22d of August Bear that in mind, bear that in mind!

[Exeunt all except *TROPHÍMOV* and *ÁNYA*.]

*Ánya* [laughing] Many thanks to the Tramp for frightening Barbara, at last we are alone

*Trophímov* Barbara's afraid we shall go and fall in love with each other Day after day she never leaves us alone With her narrow mind she cannot understand that we are above love To avoid everything petty, everything illusory, everything that prevents one from being free and happy, that is the whole meaning and purpose of our life Forward! We march on irresistibly towards that bright star which burns far, far before us! Forward! Don't tarry, comrades!

*Ánya* [clasping her hands] What beautiful things you say! [A pause] Isn't it enchanting here to-day!

*Trophímov* Yes, it's wonderful weather

*Ánya* What have you done to me, Peter? Why is it that I no longer love the cherry orchard as I did? I used to love it so tenderly, I thought there was no better place on earth than our garden.

*Trophímov* All Russia is our garden. The earth is great and beautiful, it is full of wonderful places [A pause] Think, *Ánya*, your grandfather, your great-grandfather and all your ancestors were serf-owners, owners of living souls Do not human spirits look out at you from every tree in the orchard, from every leaf and every stem? Do you not hear human voices? Oh! it is terrible Your orchard frightens me When I walk through it in the evening or at night, the rugged bark on the trees glows with a dim light, and the cherry trees seem to see all that happened a hundred and two hundred years ago in painful and oppressive dreams Well, well, we have fallen at least two hundred years behind the times We have achieved nothing at all as yet, we have not made up our minds how we stand with the past, we only philosophize, complain of boredom, or drink vodka It is so plain that, before we can live in the present, we must first redeem the past, and have done with it, and it is only by suffering that we can redeem it, only by strenuous, unremitting toil Understand that, *Ánya*

<sup>1</sup> There is a wretched pun in the original Ophelia is called Okhmelia (from *okhmelét*, to get drunk)

*Anya* The house we live in has long since ceased to be our house, and I shall go away, I give you my word

*Trophimof* If you have the household keys, throw them in the well and go away Be free, be free as the wind

*Anya [enthusiastically]* How beautifully you put it!

*Trophimof* Believe what I say, *Anya*, believe what I say I'm not thirty yet, I am still young, still a student, but what I have been through! I am hungry as the winter, I am sick, anxious, poor as a beggar Fate has tossed me hither and thither, I have been everywhere, everywhere But wherever I have been, every minute, day and night, my soul has been full of mysterious anticipations I feel the approach of happiness, *Anya*, I see it coming

*Anya [pensively]* The moon is rising

[*EPHIMÓDOF is heard still playing the same sad tune on his guitar The moon rises Somewhere beyond the poplar trees, BARBARA is heard calling for ANYA. "Anya, where are you?"*]

*Trophimof* Yes, the moon is rising [A pause] There it is, there is happiness, it is coming towards us, nearer and nearer, I can hear the sound of its footsteps And if we do not see it, if we do not know it, what does it matter? Others will see it

*Barbara [without]* *Anya?* Where are you?

*Trophimof* There's *Barbara* again! [Angrily] It really is too bad!

*Anya* Never mind Let us go down to the river It's lovely there

*Trophimof* Come on!

[*Exeunt ANYA and TROPHIMOF*]

*Barbara [without]* *Anya! Anya!*

### ACT THREE

*A sitting-room separated by an arch from a big drawing-room behind Chandelier lighted The Jewish band mentioned in Act II is heard playing on the landing Evening In the drawing-room they are dancing the grand rond SIMEÓNOF-PÍSHTCHIK is heard crying, "Promenade à une paire!"*

*The dancers come down into the sitting-room The first pair consists of PÍSHTCHIK and CHARLOTTE, the second of TROPHIMOF and MADAME RANÉVSKY, the third of ANYA and the POST-OFFICE OFFICIAL, the fourth of BARBARA and the STATIONMASTER, etc, etc BARBARA is cry-*

*ing softly and wipes away the tears as she dances In the last pair comes DUNYASHA They cross the sitting-room*

*Pishtchik* "Grand rond, balancez Les cavaliers à genou et remerciez vos dames" [FIRST in evening dress carries seltzer water across on a tray PÍSHTCHIK and TROPHIMOF come down into the sitting-room]

*Pishtchik* I am a full-blooded man, I've had two strokes already, it's hard work dancing, but, as the saying goes, "If you run with the pack, bark or no, but anyway wag your tail" I'm as strong as a horse My old father, who was fond of his joke, rest his soul, used to say, talking of our pedigree, that the ancient stock of the Simeónof-Pishtchiks was descended from that very horse that Caligula made a senator [Sitting] But the worst of it is, I've got no money A hungry dog be-

lieves in nothing but meat [Snoring and waking up again at once] I'm just the same

It's nothing but money, money, with me

*Trophimof* Yes, it's quite true, there is something horse-like about your build

*Pishtchik* Well, well a horse is a jolly creature you can sell a horse

[A sound of billiards being played in the next room BARBARA appears in the drawing-room beyond the arch]

*Trophimof [teasing her]* Madame Lopákhin! Madame Lopákhin

*Barbara [angrily]* Mouldy gentleman!

*Trophimof* Yes, I'm a mouldy gentleman, and I'm proud of it

*Barbara [bitterly]* We've hired the band, but where's the money to pay for it? [Exit]

*Trophimof [To PÍSHTCHIK]* If the energy which you have spent in the course of your whole life in looking for money to pay the interest on your loans had been diverted to some other purpose, you would have had enough of it, I dare say, to turn the world upside down

*Pishtchik* Nietzsche the philosopher, a very remarkable man, very famous, a man of gigantic intellect, says in his works that it's quite right to forge bank notes

*Trophimof* What, have you read Nietzsche?

*Pishtchik* Well Dáshenka told me

But I'm in such a hole, I'd forge 'em for twopence I've got to pay thirty-one pounds the day after to-morrow I've got thirteen pounds already [Feeling his pockets]

alarmed] My money's gone! I've lost my money! [Crying] Where's my money got to? [Joyfully] Here it is, inside the lining. It's thrown me all in a perspiration

[Enter MADAME RANÉVSKY and CHARLOTTE]

Madame Ranévsky [humming a *lezginka*!] Why is Leoníd so long? What can he be doing in the town? [To DUNYÁSHA] Dunyásha, ask the musicians if they'll have some tea

Trophímof The sale did not come off, in all probability

Madame Ranévsky It was a stupid day for the musicians to come, it was a stupid day to have this dance Well, well, it doesn't matter . . . [She sits down and sings softly to herself]

Charlotte [giving PÍSHTCHIK a pack of cards] Here is a pack of cards Think of any card you like

Pishtchik I've thought of one

Charlotte Now shuffle the pack That's all right Give them here, oh, most worthy Mr Pishtchik Ein, zwei, drei! Now look and you'll find it in your side pocket

Pishtchik [taking a card from his side pocket] The Eight of Spades! You're perfectly right [Astonished] Well, I never!

Charlotte [holding the pack on the palm of her hand, to TROPHÍMOF]. Say quickly, what's the top card?

Trophímof Well, say the Queen of Spades

Charlotte Right! [To PÍSHTCHIK] Now, then, what's the top card?

Pishtchik Ace of Hearts

Charlotte Right! [She claps her hands, the pack of cards disappears] What a beautiful day we've been having

[A mysterious female VOICE answers her as if from under the floor "Yes, indeed, a charming day, mademoiselle"]

Charlotte You are my beautiful ideal

The Voice "I think you also ferry beautiful, mademoiselle"

Stationmaster [applauding] Bravo, Miss Ventriloquist!

Pishtchik [astonished] Well, I never! Bewitching Charlotte Ivánovna, I'm head over ears in love with you

Charlotte In love! [Shrugging her shoulders] Are you capable of love? Guter Mensch, aber schlechter Musikant!

<sup>1</sup> *Lezginka* A lively Caucasian dance in two-four time, popularized by Glinka, and by Rubinstein in his opera, *Demon*

Trophímof [slapping PÍSHTCHIK on the shoulder] You old horse!

Charlotte Now, attention, please, one more trick [Taking a shawl from a chair] Now here's a shawl, and a very pretty shawl, I'm going to sell this very pretty shawl [Shaking it] Who'll buy? who'll buy?

Pishtchik [astonished] Well, I never!

Charlotte Ein, zwei, drei!

[She lifts the shawl quickly, behind it stands ÁNYA, who drops a curtsy, runs to her mother, kisses her, then runs up into the drawing-room amid general applause]

Madame Ranévsky [applauding] Bravo! bravo!

Charlotte Once more. Ein, zwei, drei!

[She lifts up the shawl, behind it stands BARBARA, bowing]

Pishtchik [astonished] Well, I never!

Charlotte That's all [She throws her shawl over PÍSHTCHIK, makes a curtsy and runs up into the drawing-room]

Pishtchik [hurrying after her] You little rascal there's a girl for you, there's a girl [Exit]

Madame Ranévsky And still no sign of Leoníd What he's doing in the town so long, I can't understand It must be all over by now, the property's sold, or the auction never came off, why does he keep me in suspense so long?

Barbara [trying to soothe her] Uncle has bought it, I am sure of that

Trophímof [mockingly] Of course he has

Barbara Grannie sent him a power of attorney to buy it in her name and transfer the mortgage She's done it for Ánya's sake I'm perfectly sure that Heaven will help us and uncle will buy it

Madame Ranévsky Your Yaroslav granmie sent fifteen hundred pounds to buy the property in her name—she doesn't trust us—but it wouldn't be enough even to pay the interest [Covering her face with her hands] My fate is being decided to-day, my fate

Trophímof [teasing BARBARA] Madame Lopákhin!

Barbara [angrily] Perpetual Student! He's been sent down twice from the University

Madame Ranévsky Why do you get angry, Barbara? He calls you Madame Lopákhin for fun Why not? You can marry Lopákhin if you like, he's a nice, interesting man, you

needn't if you don't, nobody wants to force you, my pet

Barbara I take it very seriously, mamma, I must confess He's a nice man and I like him

Madame Ranévsky Then marry him There's no good putting it off that I can see

Barbara But, mamma, I can't propose to him myself For two whole years everybody's been talking about him to me, every one, but he either says nothing or makes a joke of it I quite understand He's making money, he's always busy, he can't be bothered with me. If I only had some money, even a little, even ten pounds, I would give everything up and go right away I would go into a nunnery

Trophimof *[mocking]* What bliss!

Barbara *[to TROPHIMOF]* A student ought to be intelligent *[In a gentler voice, crying]* How ugly you've grown, Peter, how old you've grown! *[She stops crying, to MADAME RANÉVSKY]* But I can't live without work, mamma. I must have something to do every minute of the day

*[Enter YÁSHA]*

Yásha *[trying not to laugh]* Ephukhódof has broken a billiard cue *[Exit]*

Barbara What's Ephukhódof doing here? Who gave him leave to play billiards? I don't understand these people *[Exit]*

Madame Ranévsky Don't tease her, Peter Don't you see that she's unhappy enough already?

Trophimof I wish she wouldn't be so fussy, always meddling in other people's affairs The whole summer she's given me and Ánya no peace, she is afraid we'll work up a romance between us What business is it of hers? I'm sure I never gave her any grounds, I'm not likely to be so commonplace We are above love!

Madame Ranévsky Then I suppose I must be beneath love. *[Deeply agitated]* Why doesn't Leoníd come? Oh, if only I knew whether the property's sold or not! It seems such an impossible disaster, that I don't know what to think I'm bewildered I shall burst out screaming, I shall do something idiotic Save me, Peter, say something to me, say something

Trophimof Whether the property is sold to-day or whether it's not sold, surely it's all one? It's all over with it long ago, there's no turning back, the path is overgrown Be

calm, dear Lyubóf Andréyevna You mustn't deceive yourself any longer, for once you must look the truth straight in the face

Madame Ranévsky What truth? You can see what's truth, and what's untruth, but I seem to have lost the power of vision, I see nothing You settle every important question so boldly, but tell me, Peter, isn't that because you're young, because you have never solved any question of your own as yet by suffering? You look boldly ahead, isn't it only that you don't see or divine anything terrible in the future, because life is still hidden from your young eyes? You are bolder, honester, deeper than we are, but reflect, show me just a finger's breadth of consideration, take pity on me Don't you see? I was born here, my father and mother lived here, and my grandfather, I love this house, without the cherry orchard my life has no meaning for me, and if it *must* be sold, then for Heaven's sake, sell me too! *[Embracing TROPHIMOF and kissing him on the forehead]* My little boy was drowned here *[Crying]* Be gentle with me, dear, kind Peter

Trophimof You know I sympathize with all my heart

Madame Ranévsky Yes, yes, but you ought to say it somehow differently *[Taking out her handkerchief and dropping a telegram]* I am so wretched to-day, you can't imagine! All this noise jars on me, my heart jumps at every sound. I tremble all over, but I can't shut myself up, I am afraid of the silence when I'm alone Don't be hard on me, Peter, I love you like a son I would gladly let Ánya marry you, I swear it, but you must work, Peter, you must get your degree You do nothing, Fate tosses you about from place to place, and that's not right It's true what I say, isn't it? And you must do something to your beard to make it grow better *[Laughing]* I can't help laughing at you

Trophimof *[picking up the telegram]* I don't wish to be an Adonis

Madame Ranévsky It's a telegram from Paris I get them every day One came yesterday, another to-day That savage is ill again, he's in a bad way He asks me to forgive him, he begs me to come, and I really ought to go to Paris and be with him You look at me sternly, but what am I to do, Peter? What am I to do? He's ill, he's lonely, he's unhappy Who is to look after him? Who is to keep him from doing stupid



things? Who is to give him his medicine when it's time? After all, why should I be ashamed to say it? I love him, that's plain. I love him I love him. My love is like a stone tied round my neck, it's dragging me down to the bottom, but I love my stone. I can't live without it. [*Squeezing TROPHIMOF's hand*] Don't think ill of me, Peter, don't say anything! Don't say anything!

*Trophimof* [*crying*] Forgive my bluntness, for Heaven's sake, but the man has simply robbed you.

*Madame Ranévsky* No, no, no! [*Stopping her ears*] You mustn't say that!

*Trophimof* He's a rascal, everybody sees it but yourself, he's a petty rascal, a ne'er-do-well.

*Madame Ranévsky* [*angry but restrained*] You're twenty-six or twenty-seven, and you're still a Lower School boy!<sup>1</sup>

*Trophimof* Who cares?

*Madame Ranévsky* You ought to be a man by now, at your age you ought to understand people who love. You ought to love some one yourself, you ought to be in love! [*Angrily*] Yes, yes! It's not purity with you, it's simply you're a smug, a figure of fun, a freak.

*Trophimof* [*horrified*] What does she say?

*Madame Ranévsky* "I am above love!" You're not above love, you're simply what *Firs* calls a "job-lot." At your age you ought to be ashamed not to have a mistress!

*Trophimof* [*aghast*] This is awful! What does she say? [*Going quickly up into the drawing-room, clasping his head with his hands*] This is something awful! I can't stand it, I'm off. [*Exit, but returns at once*] All is over between us! [*Exit to landing*]

*Madame Ranévsky* [*calling after him*] Stop, Peter! Don't be ridiculous, I was only joking! Peter!

[*TROPHIMOF is heard on the landing going quickly down the stairs, and suddenly falling down them with a crash. ANYA and BARBARA scream. A moment later the sound of laughter.*]

*Madame Ranévsky* What has happened?  
[*ANYA runs in*]

*Anyá* [*laughing*] Peter's tumbled down-stairs. [*She runs out again*]

*Madame Ranévsky* What a ridiculous fellow he is!

[*The STATIONMASTER stands in the*

<sup>1</sup> Literally, a gymnasiast of the second form (from the bottom)

*middle of the drawing-room beyond the arch and recites Alexey Tolstoy's poem, "The Sinner." Everybody stops to listen, but after a few lines the sound of a waltz is heard from the landing and he breaks off. All dance. TROPHIMOF, ANYA, BARBARA, and MADAME RANÉVSKY enter from the landing.]*

*Madame Ranévsky* Come, Peter, come, you pure spirit. I beg your pardon. Let's have a dance. [*She dances with TROPHIMOF. ANYA and BARBARA dance.*]

[*Enter FIRS, and stands his walking-stick by the side door. Enter YÁSHA by the drawing-room, he stands looking at the dancers.*]

*Yásha* Well, grandfather?

*Firs* I'm not feeling well. In the old days it was generals and barons and admirals that danced at our dances, but now we send for the Postmaster and the Stationmaster, and even they make a favor of coming. I'm sort of weak all over. The old master, their grandfather, used to give us all sealing wax, when we had anything the matter. I've taken sealing wax every day for twenty years and more. Perhaps that's why I'm still alive.

*Yásha* I'm sick of you, grandfather. [*Yawning*] I wish you'd die and have done with it.

*Firs* Ah! you . . . job-lot. [*He mumbles to himself.*]

[*TROPHIMOF and MADAME RANÉVSKY dance beyond the arch and down into the sitting-room.*]

*Madame Ranévsky* Merci. I'll sit down. [*Sitting*] I'm tired.

[*Enter ANYA.*]

*Anyá* [*agitated*] There was somebody in the kitchen just now saying that the cherry orchard was sold to-day.

*Madame Ranévsky* Sold? Who to?

*Anyá* He didn't say who to. He's gone. [*She dances with TROPHIMOF. Both dance up into the drawing-room.*]

*Yásha* It was some old fellow chattering, a stranger.

*Firs* And still Leoníd Andréyitch doesn't come. He's wearing his light overcoat, *demi-saison*, he'll catch cold as like as not. Ah, young wood, green wood!

*Madame Ranévsky* This is killing me. *Yásha*, go and find out who it was sold to.

Yasha Why, he's gone long go, the old man [Laughs]

Madame Ranétsky [tired] What are you laughing at? What are you glad about?

Yasha He's a ridiculous fellow is Ephikhódof Nothing in him Twenty-two misfortunes!

Madame Ranétsky First, if the property is sold, where will you go to?

First Wherever you tell me, there I'll go

Madame Ranétsky Why do you look like that? Are you ill? You ought to be in bed

First [ironically] Oh, yes, I'll go to bed, and who'll hand the things round, who'll give orders? I've the whole house on my hands

Yasha Lyubóf Andréyevna! Let me ask a favor of you, be so kind, if you go to Paris again, take me with you, I beseech you It's absolutely impossible for me to stay here [Looking about, sotto voce] What's the use of talking? You can see for yourself this is a barbarous country, the people have no morals, and the boredom! The food in the kitchen is something shocking, and on the top of it old First going about mumbling irrelevant nonsense Take me back with you, be so kind!

[Enter Píshchuk]

Píshchuk May I have the pleasure a bit of a waltz, charming lady? [MADAME RANÉVSKY takes his arm] All the same, enchanting lady, you must let me have eighteen pounds [Dancing] Let me have eighteen pounds. [Exeunt dancing through the arch]

Yasha [singing to himself]

"Oh, wilt thou understand

The turmoil of my soul?"

[Beyond the arch appears a figure in gray tall hat and check trousers, jumping and waving its arms Cries of "Bravo, Charlotte Ivánovna"]

Dunyásha [stopping to powder her face] Mamselle Anya tells me I'm to dance, there are so many gentlemen and so few ladies But dancing makes me giddy and makes my heart beat, First Nikoláyevitch, and just now the gentleman from the post-office said something so nice to me, oh, so nice! It quite took my breath away [The music stops]

First What did he say to you?

Dunyásha He said, "You are like a flower"

Yasha [yawning] Cad! [Exit]

Dunyásha Like a flower! I am so lady-like and refined, I dote on compliments.

First You'll come to a bad end

[Enter EPHIKHÓDOF.]

Ephikhódof You are not pleased to see me, Andréya Ivánovna, no more than if I were some sort of insect [Sighing] Ah! Lase! Lase!

Dunyásha What do you want?

Ephikhódof Undoubtedly perhaps you are right [Sighing] But of course, if one regards it, so to speak, from the point of view, if I may allow myself the expression, and with apologies for my frankness, you have finally reduced me to a state of mind I quite appreciate my destiny, every day some misfortune happens to me, and I have long since grown accustomed to it, and face my fortune with a smile You have passed your word to me, and although I

Dunyásha Let us talk of this another time, if you please, but now leave me in peace I am busy meditating [Playing with her fan]

Ephikhódof Every day some misfortune befalls me, and yet if I may venture to say so, I meet them with smiles and even laughter

[Enter BARBARA from the drawing-room]

Barbara [to EPHIKHÓDOF] Haven't you gone yet, Simon? You seem to pay no attention to what you're told [To DUNYÁSHA] You get out of here, Dunyásha [To EPHIKHÓDOF] First you play billiards and break a cue, and then you march about the drawing-room as if you were a guest!

Ephikhódof Allow me to inform you that it's not your place to call me to account

Barbara I'm not calling you to account, I'm merely talking to you All you can do is to walk about from one place to another, without ever doing a stroke of work; and why on earth we keep a clerk at all Heaven only knows

Ephikhódof [offended] Whether I work, or whether I walk, or whether I eat, or whether I play billiards is a question to be decided only by my elders and people who understand

Barbara [furious] How dare you talk to me like that! How dare you! I don't understand things, don't I? You clear out of here this minute! Do you hear me? This minute!

Ephikhódof [flinching] I must beg you to express yourself in genteeler language

Barbara [beside herself] You clear out this instant second! Out you go! [Following him as he retreats towards the door] Twenty-two misfortunes! Make yourself scarce! Get out of my sight!

[Exit EPHIKHÓDOF.]



*Ephikhódof [without]* I shall lodge a complaint against you

*Barbara* What! You're coming back, are you? [*Seizing the walking-stick left at the door by FIRS*] Come on! Come on! Come on! I'll teach you! Are you coming? Are you coming? Then take that [*She slashes with the stick*]

[*Enter LOPÁKHIN*]

*Lopákhin* Many thanks, much obliged

*Barbara [still angry, but ironical]* Sorry!

*Lopákhin* Don't mention it I'm very grateful for your warm reception

*Barbara* It's not worth thanking me for [*She walks away, then looks round and asks in a gentle voice*] I didn't hurt you?

*Lopákhin* Oh, no, nothing to matter I shall have a bump like a goose's egg, that's all

[*Voices from the drawing-room "Lopákhin has arrived! Yermolái Alexéyitch!"*]

*Pishtchik* Let my eyes see him, let my ears hear him! [*He and LOPÁKHIN kiss*] You smell of brandy, old man We're having a high time, too

[*Enter MADAME RANÉVSKY*]

*Madame Ranévsky* Is it you, Yermolái Alexéyitch? Why have you been so long? Where is Leoníd?

*Lopákhin* Leoníd Andréyitch came back with me He's just coming

*Madame Ranévsky [agitated]* What happened? Did the sale come off? Tell me, tell me!

*Lopákhin [embarrassed, afraid of showing his pleasure]* The sale was all over by four o'clock We missed the train and had to wait till half-past eight [*Sighing heavily*] Ouf! I'm rather giddy

[*Enter GÁYEF In one hand he carries parcels, with the other he wipes away his tears*]

*Madame Ranévsky* What happened, Lén-ya? Come, Lén-ya! [*Impatiently, crying*] Be quick, be quick, for Heaven's sake!

*Gáyef [answering her only with an up-and-down gesture of the hand, to FIRS, crying]* Here take these Here are some anchovies and Black Sea herrings I've had nothing to eat all day Lord, what I've been through! [*Through the open door of the billiard-room comes the click of the billiard balls and YASHA'S voice "Seven, eighteen!" GÁYEF'S expression*

*changes, he stops crying*] I'm frightfully tired Come and help me change, Firs [*He goes up through the drawing-room, FIRS following*]

*Pishtchik* What about the sale? Come on, tell us all about it

*Madame Ranévsky* Was the cherry orchard sold?

*Lopákhin* Yes

*Madame Ranévsky* Who bought it?

*Lopákhin* I did [*A pause MADAME RANÉVSKY is overwhelmed at the news She would fall to the ground but for the chair and table by her BARBARA takes the keys from her belt, throws them on the floor in the middle of the sitting-room, and exit*] I bought it Wait a bit, don't hurry me, my head's in a whirl, I can't speak [*Laughing*] When we got to the sale, Derigánof was there already Leoníd Andréyitch had only fifteen hundred pounds, and Derigánof bid three thousand more than the mortgage right away When I saw how things stood, I went for him and did four thousand He said four thousand five hundred I said five thousand five hundred He went up by five hundreds, you see, and I went up by thousands Well, it was soon over I bid nine thousand more than the mortgage, and got it, and now the cherry orchard is mine! Mine! [*Laughing*] Heavens alive! Just think of it! The cherry orchard is mine! Tell me that I'm drunk, tell me that I'm off my head, tell me that it's all a dream! [*Stamping his feet*] Don't laugh at me! If only my father and my grandfather could rise from their graves and see the whole affair, how their Yermolái, their flogged and ignorant Yermolái, who used to run about barefooted in the winter, how this same Yermolái had bought a property that hasn't its equal for beauty anywhere in the whole world! I have bought the property where my father and grandfather were slaves, where they weren't even allowed into the kitchen I'm asleep, it's only a vision, it isn't real 'Tis the fruit of imagination, wrapped in the mists of ignorance [*Picking up the keys and smiling affectionately*] She's thrown down her keys, she wants to show that she's no longer mistress here [*Jingling them together*] Well, well, what's the odds? [*The musicians are heard tuning up*] Hey, musicians, play! I want to hear you Come, every one, and see Yermolái Lopákhin lay his axe to the cherry orchard, come and see the trees fall down! We'll fill the place with

villas, our grandsons and great-grandsons shall see a new life here Strike up, music!

[The band plays MADAME RANÉVSKY sinks into a chair and weeps bitterly]

Lopákhin [reproachfully] Oh, why, why didn't you listen to me? You can't put the clock back now, poor dear [Crying] Oh, that all this were past and over! Oh, that our unhappy topsy-turvy life were changed!

Pishtchik [taking him by the arm, sotto voce] She's crying Let's go into the drawing-room and leave her alone to Come on.

[Taking him by the arm, and going up toward the drawing-room]

Lopákhin What's up? Play your best, musicians! Let everything be as I want [Ironically] Here comes the new squire, the owner of the cherry orchard! [Knocking up by accident against a table and nearly throwing down the candelabra] Never mind, I can pay for everything!

[Exit with PISHTCHIK. Nobody remains in the drawing-room or sitting-room except MADAME RANÉVSKY, who sits huddled together, weeping bitterly The band plays softly]

[Enter ÁNYA and TROPHÍMOF quickly ÁNYA goes to her mother and kneels before her TROPHÍMOF stands in the entry to the drawing-room]

Anyá Mamma! Are you crying, mamma? My dear, good, sweet mamma! Darling, I love you! I bless you! The cherry orchard is sold, it's gone, it's quite true, it's quite true But don't cry, mamma, you've still got life before you, you've still got your pure and lovely soul Come with me, darling, come away from here We'll plant a new garden, still lovelier than this You will see it and understand, and happiness, deep, tranquil happiness will sink down on your soul, like the sun at eventide, and you'll smile, mamma. Come, darling, come with me!

#### ACT FOUR

Same scene as Act One There are no window curtains, no pictures The little furniture left is stacked in a corner, as if for sale A feeling of emptiness By the door to the hall and at the back of the scene are piled portmanteaux, bundles, etc. The door is open and the voices of BARBARA and ÁNYA are audible

LOPÁKHIN stands waiting YÁSHA holds a

tray with small tumblers full of champagne EPHIKHÓDOF is tying up a box in the hall A distant murmur of voices behind the scene, the PEASANTS have come to say good-bye

Gáyef [without] Thank you, my lads, thank you

Yásha The common people have come to say good-bye I'll tell you what I think, Yermolái Alexéyitch, they're good fellows but rather stupid

[The murmur of voices dies away]

[Enter MADAME RANÉVSKY and GÁYEF from the hall She is not crying, but she is pale, her face twitches, she cannot speak]

Gáyef You gave them your purse, Lyuba That was wrong, very wrong!

Madame Ranévsky I couldn't help it, I couldn't help it!

[Exit both]

Lopákhin [calling after them through the doorway] Please come here! Won't you come here? Just a glass to say good-bye I forgot to bring any from the town, and could only raise one bottle at the station Come along [A pause] What, won't you have any? [Returning from the door] If I'd known, I wouldn't have bought it I shan't have any either [YÁSHA sets the tray down carefully on a chair] Drink it yourself, Yásha.

Yásha Here's to our departure! Good luck to them that stay! [Drinking] This isn't real champagne, you take my word for it

Lopákhin Sixteen shillings a bottle [A pause] It's devilish cold in here

Yásha The fires weren't lighted to-day, we're all going away [He laughs]

Lopákhin What are you laughing for?

Yásha Just pleasure.

Lopákhin Here we are in October, but it's as calm and sunny as summer Good building weather [Looking at his watch and speaking off] Don't forget that there's only forty-seven minutes before the train goes You must start for the station in twenty minutes Make haste

[Enter TROPHÍMOF in an overcoat, from out of doors]

TrophímoF I think it's time we were off The carriages are round What the deuce has become of my goloshes? I've lost 'em [Calling off] Ánya, my goloshes have disappeared I can't find them anywhere!

*Lopákhin* I've got to go to Kharkof I'll start in the same train with you I'm going to spend the winter at Kharkof I've been loafing about all this time with you people, eating my head off for want of work I can't live without work, I don't know what to do with my hands, they dangle about as if they didn't belong to me

*Trophimof* Well, we're going now, and you'll be able to get back to your beneficent labors

*Lopákhin* Have a glass

*Trophimof* Not for me

*Lopákhin* Well, so you're off to Moscow?

*Trophimof* Yes, I'll see them into the town, and go on to Moscow to-morrow

*Lopákhin* Well, well, I suppose the professors haven't started their lectures yet, they're waiting till you arrive

*Trophimof* It's no affair of yours

*Lopákhin* How many years have you been up at the University?

*Trophimof* Try and think of some new joke, this one's getting a bit flat [*Looking for his goloshes*] Look here, I dare say we shan't meet again, so let me give you a bit of advice as a keepsake Don't flap your hands about! Get out of the habit of flapping Building villas, prophesying that villa residents will turn into small freeholders, all that sort of thing is flapping, too Well, when all's said and done, I like you. You have thin, delicate, artist fingers, you have a delicate artist soul

*Lopákhin* [*embracing him*] Good-bye, old chap Thank you for everything Take some money off me for the journey if you want it

*Trophimof* What for? I don't want it

*Lopákhin* But you haven't got any

*Trophimof* Yes, I have Many thanks I got some for a translation Here it is, in my pocket [*Anxiously*] I can't find my goloshes anywhere!

*Barbara* [*from the next room*] Here, take your garbage away! [*She throws a pair of goloshes on the stage*]

*Trophimof* What are you so cross about, Barbara? Humph! But those aren't my goloshes!

*Lopákhin* In the spring I sowed three thousand acres of poppy and I have cleared four thousand pounds net profit When my poppies were in flower, what a picture they made! So you see, I cleared four thousand pounds, and I wanted to lend you a bit be-

cause I've got it to spare What's the good of being stuck up? I'm a peasant. . . . As man to man . . .

*Trophimof* Your father was a peasant, mine was a chemist, it doesn't prove anything [*LOPÁKHIN takes out his pocket-book with paper money*] Shut up, shut up If you offered me twenty thousand pounds I would not take it I am a free man, nothing that you value so highly, all of you, rich and poor, has the smallest power over me, it's like thistledown floating on the wind I can do without you, I can go past you, I'm strong and proud Mankind marches forward to the highest truth, to the highest happiness possible on earth, and I march in the foremost ranks

*Lopákhin* Will you get there?

*Trophimof* Yes [*A pause*] I will get there myself, or I will show others the way

[*The sound of axes hewing is heard in the distance*]

*Lopákhin* Well, good-bye, old chap, it is time to start Here we stand swaggering to each other, and life goes by all the time without heeding us When I work for hours without getting tired, I get easy in my mind and I seem to know why I exist But God alone knows what most of the people in Russia were born for Well, who cares? It doesn't affect the circulation of work They say Leoníd Andréyitch has got a place, he's going to be in a bank and get six hundred pounds a year He won't sit it out, he's too lazy

*Ánya* [*in the doorway*] Mamma says will you stop them cutting down the orchard till she has gone?

*Trophimof* Really, haven't you got tact enough for that? [*Exit by the hall*]

*Lopákhin* Of course, I'll stop them at once—What fools they are! [*Exit after TROPHIMOF*]

*Ánya* Has Firs been sent to the hospital?

*Yásha* I told 'em this morning They're sure to have sent him

*Ánya* [*to EPIKHÓDOF, who crosses*] Simeon Panteléyitch, please find out if Firs has been sent to the hospital

*Yásha* [*offended*] I told George this morning What's the good of asking a dozen times?

*Ephikhódof* Our centenarian friend, in my conclusive opinion, is hardly worth tinkering, it's time he was despatched to his forefathers I can only say I envy him [*Putting down a*

*portmanteau on a bandbox and crushing it flat*]  
There you are! I knew how it would be!  
[Exit]

Yásha [*jeering*] Twenty-two misfortunes!  
Barbara [*without*] Has Firs been sent to the hospital?

Ánya Yes

Barbara Why didn't they take the note to the doctor?

Ánya We must send it after them [Exit]

Barbara [*from the next room*] Where's Yásha? Tell him his mother is here. She wants to say good-bye to him

Yásha [*with a gesture of impatience*] It's enough to try the patience of a saint!

[DUNYÁSHA has been busying herself with the luggage. Seeing YÁSHA alone, she approaches him]

Dunyásha You might just look once at me, Yásha. You are going away, you are leaving me [*Crying and throwing her arms round his neck*]

Yásha What's the good of crying? [*Drinking champagne*] In six days I shall be back in Paris. To-morrow we take the express, off we go, and that's the last of us! I can hardly believe it's true. *Vive la France!* This place don't suit me. I can't bear it. It can't be helped. I have had enough barbarism, I'm fed up [*Drinking champagne*] What's the good of crying? You be a good girl, and you'll have no call to cry

Dunyásha [*powdering her face and looking into a glass*] Write me a letter from Paris. I've been so fond of you, Yásha, ever so fond! I am a delicate creature, Yásha

Yásha Here's somebody coming [*He buses himself with the luggage, singing under his breath*]

[Enter MADAME RANÉVSKY, GÁYEF, ÁNYA, and CHARLOTTE]

Gáyef We'll have to be off, it's nearly time. [*Looking at YÁSHA.*] Who is it smells of red herring?

Madame Ranévsky We must take our seats in ten minutes. [*Looking round the room*] Good-bye, dear old house, good-bye, grand-papa! When winter is past and spring comes again, you will be here no more, they will have pulled you down. Oh, think of all these walls have seen! [*Kissing ÁNYA passionately*] My treasure, you look radiant, your eyes flash like two diamonds. Are you happy?—very happy?

Ánya Very, very happy. We're beginning a new life, mamma

Gáyef [*gayly*] She's quite right; everything's all right now. Till the cherry orchard was sold we were all agitated and miserable, but once the thing was settled finally and irrevocably, we all calmed down and got jolly again. I'm a bank clerk now, I'm a financier. red in the middle! And you, Lyuba, whatever you may say, you're looking ever so much better, not a doubt about it

Madame Ranévsky Yes, my nerves are better, it's quite true [*She is helped on with her hat and coat*] I sleep well now. Take my things out, Yásha. We must be off [*To ÁNYA*] We shall soon meet again, darling. . . I'm off to Paris, I shall live on the money your grandmother sent from Yaroslav to buy the property. God bless your grandmother! I'm afraid it won't last long

Ánya You'll come back very, very soon, won't you, mamma? I'm going to work and pass the examination at the Gymnase and get a place and help you. We'll read all sorts of books together, won't we, mamma? [*Kissing her mother's hands*] We'll read in the long autumn evenings, we'll read heaps of books, and a new, wonderful world will open up before us. [*Meditating*] . . . Come back, mamma!

Madame Ranévsky I'll come back, my angel [*Embracing her*]

[Enter LOPÁKHIN. CHARLOTTE sings softly]

Gáyef Happy Charlotte, she's singing

Charlotte [*taking a bundle of rags, like a swaddled baby*] Hush-a-bye, baby, on the tree-top [*The baby answers, "Wah, wah"*] Hush, my little one, hush, my pretty one! ["Wah, wah"] You'll break your mother's heart [*She throws the bundle down on the floor again*] Don't forget to find me a new place, please. I can't do without it

Lopákhin We'll find you a place, Charlotte Ivánovna, don't be afraid

Gáyef Everybody's deserting us. Barbara's going. Nobody seems to want us

Charlotte There's nowhere for me to live in town. I'm obliged to go [*Hums a tune*] What's the odds?

[Enter PÍSHTCHIK]

Lopákhin Nature's masterpiece!

Pishtchik [*panting*] Oy, oy, let me get my breath again! I'm done up! My noble friends! Give me some water

*Gáyef* Wants some money, I suppose No, thank you, I'll keep out of harm's way [*Exit*]

*Pishtchik* It's ages since I have been here, fairest lady [*To LOPÁKHIN*] You here? Glad to see you, you man of gigantic intellect Take this, it's for you [*Giving LOPÁKHIN money*] Forty pounds! I still owe you eighty-four

*Lopákhin* [*amazed, shrugging his shoulders*] It's like a thing in a dream! Where did you get it from?

*Pishtchik* Wait a bit . I'm hot . A most remarkable thing! Some Englishmen came and found some sort of white clay on my land [*To MADAME RANÉVSKY*] And here's forty pounds for you, lovely, wonderful lady [*Giving her money*] The rest another time [*Drinking water*] Only just now a young man in the train was saying that some some great philosopher advises us all to jump off roofs Jump, he says, and there's an end of it [*With an astonished air*] Just think of that! More water!

*Lopákhin* Who were the Englishmen?

*Pishtchik* I leased them the plot with the clay on it for twenty-four years But I haven't any time now I must be getting on I must go to Znoikof's, to Kardamónof's

I owe everybody money [*Drinking*] Good-bye to every one, I'll look in on Thursday

*Madame Ranévsky* We're just moving into town, and to-morrow I go abroad

*Pishtchik* What! [*Alarmed*] What are you going into town for? Why, what's happened to the furniture? Trunks? Oh, it's all right [*Crying*] It's all right People of powerful intellect . those Englishmen It's all right Be happy God be with you it's all right Everything in this world has to come to an end [*Kissing MADAME RANÉVSKY'S hand*] If ever the news reaches you that I have come to an end, give a thought to the old horse, and say, "Once there lived a certain Simeónof-Pishtchik, Heaven rest his soul " Remarkable weather we're having

Yes [*Goes out deeply moved Returns at once and says from the doorway*] Dáshenka sent her compliments [*Exit*]

*Madame Ranévsky* Now we can go I have only two things on my mind One is poor old Firs [*Looking at her watch*] We can still stay five minutes

*Ánya.* Firs has been sent to the hospital

already, mamma Yásha sent him off this morning

*Madame Ranévsky* My second anxiety is Barbara. She's used to getting up early and working, and now that she has no work to do she's like a fish out of water She has grown thin and pale and taken to crying, poor dear

[*A pause*] You know very well, Yermolái Alexéyitch, I always hoped to see her married to you, and as far as I can see, you're looking out for a wife [*She whispers to ÁNYA, who nods to CHARLOTTE, and both exeunt*] She loves you, you like her, and I can't make out why you seem to fight shy of each other I don't understand it

*Lopákhin* I don't understand it either, to tell you the truth It all seems so odd If there's still time I'll do it this moment Let's get it over and have done with it, without you there, I feel as if I should never propose to her

*Madame Ranévsky* A capital idea! After all, it doesn't take more than a minute I'll call her at once

*Lopákhin* And here's the champagne all ready [*Looking at the glasses*] Empty, some one's drunk it [*YÁSHA coughs*] That's what they call lapping it up and no mistake!

*Madame Ranévsky* [*animated*] Capital! We'll all go away *Allez, Yásha* I'll call her [*At the door*] Barbara, leave all that and come here Come along!

[*Exeunt MADAME RANÉVSKY and YÁSHA*]

*Lopákhin* [*looking at his watch*] Yes

[*A pause A stifled laugh behind the door, whispering, at last enter BARBARA*]

*Barbara* [*examining the luggage*] Very odd, I can't find it anywhere

*Lopákhin* What are you looking for?

*Barbara* I packed it myself, and can't remember [*A pause*]

*Lopákhin* Where are you going to-day, Varvára Mikhálovna?

*Barbara* Me? I'm going to the Ragulins I'm engaged to go and keep house for them, to be housekeeper or whatever it is

*Lopákhin* Oh, at Yáshnevo? That's about fifty miles from here [*A pause*] Well, so life in this house is over now

*Barbara* [*looking at the luggage*] Wherever can it be? Perhaps I put it in the trunk Yes, life here is over now, there won't be any more .

*Lopákhin* And I'm off to Kharkof at once by the same train. A lot of business to do. I'm leaving Ephikhódof to look after this place. I've taken him on.

*Barbara*. Have you?

*Lopákhin* At this time last year snow was falling already, if you remember, but now it's fine and sunny. Still, it's cold for all that. Three degrees of frost.

*Barbara* Were there? I didn't look. [A pause] Besides, the thermometer's broken.

*A Voice [at the outer door]* Yermolái Alexeyitch!

*Lopákhin [as if he had only been waiting to be called]* I'm just coming! [Exit quickly]

[BARBARA sits on the floor, puts her head on a bundle and sobs softly. The door opens and MADAME RANÉVSKY comes in cautiously.]

*Madame Ranévsky* Well? [A pause] We must be off.

*Barbara [no longer crying, wiping her eyes]* Yes, it's time, mamma. I shall get to the Ragulins all right to-day, so long as I don't miss the train.

*Madame Ranévsky [calling off]* Put on your things, Ánya.

[Enter ÁNYA, then GÁYEF and CHARLOTTE. GÁYEF wears a warm overcoat with a hood. The servants and drivers come in. EPHIKHÓDOF busies himself about the luggage.]

*Madame Ranévsky* Now we can start on our journey.

*ÁNYA [delighted]* We can start on our journey!

*Gáyef* My friends, my dear, beloved friends! Now that I am leaving this house forever, can I keep silence? Can I refrain from expressing those emotions which fill my whole being at such a moment?

*Ánya [pleadingly]* Uncle!

*Barbara* Uncle, what's the good?

*Gáyef [sadly]* Double the red in the middle pocket. I'll hold my tongue.

[Enter TROPHÍMOF, then LOPÁKHIN.]

*Trophímof* Come along, it's time to start.

*Lopákhin* Ephikhódof, my coat.

*Madame Ranévsky* I must sit here another minute. It's just as if I had never noticed before what the walls and ceilings of the house were like. I look at them hungrily, with such tender love.

*Gáyef* I remember, when I was six years

old, how I sat in this window on Trinity Sunday, and watched father starting out for church.

*Madame Ranévsky* Has everything been cleared out?

*Lopákhin* Apparently everything. [To EPHIKHÓDOF, putting on his overcoat] See that everything's in order, Ephikhódof.

*Ephikhódof [in a hoarse voice]* You trust me, Yermolái Alexeyitch.

*Lopákhin* What's up with your voice?

*Ephikhódof* I was just having a drink of water. I swallowed something.

*Yásha [contemptuously]* Cad!

*Madame Ranévsky* We're going, and not a soul will be left here.

*Lopákhin* Until the spring.

[BARBARA pulls an umbrella out of a bundle of rugs, as if she were brandishing it to strike. LOPÁKHIN pretends to be frightened.]

*Barbara* Don't be so silly! I never thought of such a thing.

*Trophímof* Come, we'd better go and get in. It's time to start. The train will be in immediately.

*Barbara* There are your goloshes, Peter, by that portmanteau. [Crying] What dirty old things they are!

*Trophímof [putting on his goloshes]* Come along.

*Gáyef [much moved, afraid of crying]* The train the station double the red in the middle, doublette to pot the white in the corner<sup>1</sup>.

*Madame Ranévsky* Come on!

*Lopákhin* Is every one here? No one left in there? [Locking the door] There are things stacked in there, I must lock them up. Come on!

*Ánya*. Good-bye, house! Good-bye, old life!

*Trophímof* Welcome, new life! [Exit with ÁNYA. BARBARA looks round the room, and exit slowly. Exit YÁSHA and CHARLOTTE with her dog.]

*Lopákhin* Till the spring, then. Go on, everybody. So-long! [Exit]

[MADAME RANÉVSKY and GÁYEF remain alone. They seem to have been waiting for this, throw their arms round

<sup>1</sup> If you make your ball hit the cushion and run across into a pocket, it is a double, if I hit the cushion myself and pot you on the rebound, it is a doublette.

*each other's necks and sob restrainedly and gently, afraid of being overheard]*

*Gáyef [in despair]* My sister! my sister!

*Madame Ranévsky* Oh, my dear, sweet, lovely orchard! My life, my youth, my happiness, farewell! Farewell!

*Ánya [calling gayly, without]* Mamma!

*Trophímof [gay and excited]* Aoo!

*Madame Ranévsky* One last look at the walls and the windows. . Our dear mother used to love to walk up and down this room

*Gáyef* My sister! my sister!

*Ánya [without]* Mamma!

*Trophímof [without]* Aoo!

*Madame Ranévsky* We're coming

*[Exeunt The stage is empty One hears all the doors being locked, and the carriages driving away All is quiet Amid the silence the thud of the axes on the trees echoes sad and lonely The sound of footsteps FIRS appears in the doorway, right. He is dressed, as*

*always, in his long coat and white waistcoat, he wears slippers. He is ill]*

*Firs [going to the door, left, and trying the handle]* Locked They've gone *[Sitting on the sofa]* They've forgotten me Never mind! I'll sit here Leoníd Andréyitch is sure to put on his cloth coat instead of his fur *[He sighs anxiously]* He hadn't me to see Young wood, green wood! *[He mumbles something incomprehensible]* Life has gone by as if I'd never lived *[Lying down]* I'll lie down There's no strength left in you, there's nothing, nothing Ah, you . job-lot!

*[He lies motionless A distant sound is heard, as if from the sky, the sound of a string breaking, dying away, melancholy Silence ensues, broken only by the stroke of the axe on the trees far away in the cherry orchard]*

THE END

RIDERS TO THE SEA

By J M SYNGE



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## JOHN MILLINGTON SYNGE AND THE IRISH NATIONAL THEATRE

ALTHOUGH Ireland has given the English drama some of its most prominent authors—Farquhar, Goldsmith, Boucicault, Wilde, and Shaw—it is not surprising that she had no dramatic tradition of her own until the turn of the twentieth century, for Ireland was little more than a British colony. In the 1890's, however, the various efforts to awaken Irish national spirit and to achieve independence from England came to a head. The Irish, as Yeats said, were at that stage in their history where the imagination, shaped by stirring events, desired dramatic expression. The Irish Literary Theatre, which was to become the famous Abbey Theatre Company, was organized in response to this desire by William Butler Yeats, Lady Augusta Gregory, Edward Martyn, and George Moore with, later, the assistance of the Fay brothers and Miss A. E. F. Horniman. The announced intention of the group was to tell the people of their own life, or of the life of poetry where every man can see his own image. To this end, their strongest assistance came from John Millington Synge.

Synge, who had been born in a Dublin suburb in 1871, was typical of the young Irish intellectuals of the late nineteenth century. After graduation from Trinity College, he took himself first to Germany and then to Paris, where, in the company of other expatriates, he attempted to earn a living as a journalist. In 1898, Yeats discovered him and urged him to return to Ireland and take up a career as a serious artist. Synge did so, going not to Dublin but to the Aran Islands where he lived among the peasants and drew inspiration from their wild imaginings and racy phrases. The story has often been told of his listening through a chink in the floor to the chatter of serving-maids in the inn kitchen below. "In countries," he wrote, "where the imagination of the people, and the language they use, is rich and living, it is possible for a writer to be rich and copious in his words, and at the same time to give the reality, which is the root of all poetry, in a comprehensive and natural form."

His first play, *In the Shadow of the Glen*, was produced in 1903, and established not only the characteristics of all his works, but the pattern of their reception by the audience. The play is concerned with peasants, with a typical folk-story situation, written in language "as fully flavored as a nut or apple." The reaction of the audience was so violently disapproving as to require police protection for the actors. The riot was politically inspired and soon quelled, a later riot, attending the premier of *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), was less easily subdued, pursuing the play even on the Abbey's visit to America, where potatoes were frequently flung on the stage.

*Riders to the Sea* was produced without disturbance. In its brief act, Synge has written the finest of all folk dramas, and perhaps the purest example of modern tragedy. Indeed, it is very near to the great classical concept of tragedy, the lifelong struggle of the protagonist against a natural force too great for her, her final defeat, and acceptance. Writing in terms of a simple peasant family, Synge has none the less achieved the universal quality necessary for enduring drama. Maurya's tragedy is one in which we can all participate, she is humanity in its ceaseless struggle for existence.

That Maurya is an ignorant peasant woman instead of a hero of rank and achievement, and that the forces of her defeat are natural (the sea) rather than the supernatural (fate, the gods), is only a greater tribute to Synge's achievement. With great economy of means and great richness of language, he has written a play which, in spite of endless reproductions under all sorts of conditions, still has power to move an audience beyond, perhaps, any other play of the last century.

*Riders to the Sea* was first performed at the Molesworth Hall, Dublin, in 1904, with Honor Lavelle as Maurya, W. G. Fay as Bartley, and Sara Allgood as Cathleen.

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## CHARACTERS

MAURYA, *an old woman*  
BARTLEY, *her son*  
CATHLEEN, *her daughter*  
NORA, *a younger daughter*  
MEN AND WOMEN

## RIDERS TO THE SEA

SCENE—*An Island off the West of Ireland Cottage kitchen, with nets, oil-skins, spinning wheel, some new boards standing by the wall, etc* CATHLEEN, a girl of about twenty, finishes kneading cake, and puts it down in the pot-oven by the fire, then wipes her hands, and begins to spin at the wheel NORA, a young girl, puts her head in at the door

Nora [*in a low voice*] Where is she?

Cathleen She's lying down, God help her, and may be sleeping, if she's able

[NORA comes in softly, and takes a bundle from under her shawl]

Cathleen [*spinning the wheel rapidly*] What is it you have?

Nora The young priest is after bringing them It's a shirt and a plain stocking were got off a drowned man in Donegal

[CATHLEEN stops her wheel with a sudden movement, and leans out to listen]

Nora We're to find out if it's Michael's they are, some time herself will be down looking by the sea

Cathleen How would they be Michael's, Nora How would he go the length of that way to the far north?

Nora The young priest says he's known the like of it "If it's Michael's they are," says he, "you can tell herself he's got a clean burial by the grace of God, and if they're not his, let no one say a word about them, for she'll be getting her death," says he, "with crying and lamenting"

[The door which NORA half closed is blown open by a gust of wind]

Cathleen [*looking out anxiously*] Did you ask him would he stop Bartley going this day with the horses to the Galway fair?

Nora "I won't stop him," says he, "but let you not be afraid Herself does be saying prayers half through the night, and the Almighty God won't leave her destitute," says he, "with no son living"

Cathleen Is the sea bad by the white rocks, Nora?

Nora Middling bad, God help us There's a great roaring in the west, and it's worse it'll be getting when the tide's turned

to the wind [*She goes over to the table with the bundle*] Shall I open it now?

Cathleen Maybe she'd wake up on us and come in before we'd done [*Coming to the table*] It's a long time we'll be, and the two of us crying

Nora [*goes to the inner door and listens*] She's moving about on the bed She'll be coming in a minute

Cathleen Give me the ladder, and I'll put them up in the turf-loft, the way she won't know of them at all, and maybe when the tide turns she'll be going down to see would he be floating from the east

[*They put the ladder against the gable of the chimney, CATHLEEN goes up a few steps and hides the bundle in the turf-loft* MAURYA comes from the inner room]

Maurya [*looking up at CATHLEEN and speaking querulously*] Isn't it turf enough you have for this day and evening?

Cathleen There's a cake baking at the fire for a short space [*throwing down the turf*] and Bartley will want it when the tide turns if he goes to Connemara

[NORA picks up the turf and puts it round the pot-oven]

Maurya [*sitting down on a stool at the fire*] He won't go this day with the wind rising from the south and west He won't go this day, for the young priest will stop him surely

Nora He'll not stop him, mother, and I heard Eamon Simon and Stephen Pheety and Colum Shawn saying he would go

Maurya Where is he itself?

Nora He went down to see would there be another boat sailing in the week, and I'm thinking it won't be long till he's here now, for the tide's turning at the green head, and the hooker's tacking from the east

Cathleen I hear some one passing the big stones

Nora [*looking out*] He's coming now, and he in a hurry

Bartley [*comes in and looks round the room, speaking sadly and quietly*] Where is the bit of new rope, Cathleen, was bought in Connemara?

*Cathleen [coming down]* Give it to him, Nora, it's on a nail by the white boards I hung it up this morning, for the pig with the black feet was eating it

*Nora [giving him a rope]* Is that it, Bartley?

*Maurya* You'd do right to leave that rope, Bartley, hanging by the boards [*BARTLEY takes the rope*] It will be wanting in this place, I'm telling you, if Michael is washed up tomorrow morning, or the next morning, or any morning in the week, for it's a deep grave we'll make him by the grace of God

*Bartley [beginning to work with the rope]* I've no halter the way I can ride down on the mare, and I must go now quickly This is the one boat going for two weeks or beyond it, and the fair will be a good fair for horses I heard them saying below

*Maurya* It's a hard thing they'll be saying below if the body is washed up and there's no man in it to make the coffin, and I after giving a big price for the finest white boards you'd find in Connemara

*[She looks round at the boards]*

*Bartley* How would it be washed up, and we after looking each day for nine days, and a strong wind blowing a while back from the west and south?

*Maurya* If it wasn't found itself, that wind is raising the sea, and there was a star up against the moon, and it rising in the night If it was a hundred horses, or a thousand horses you had itself, what is the price of a thousand horses against a son where there is one son only?

*Bartley [working at the halter, to CATHLEEN]* Let you go down each day, and see the sheep aren't jumping in on the rye, and if the jobber comes you can sell the pig with the black feet if there is a good price going

*Maurya* How would the like of her get a good price for a pig?

*Bartley [to CATHLEEN]* If the west wind holds with the last bit of the moon let you and Nora get up weed enough for another cock for the kelp It's hard set we'll be from this day with no one in it but one man to work

*Maurya* It's hard set we'll be surely the day you're drownd'd with the rest What way will I live and the girls with me, and I an old woman looking for the grave?

*[BARTLEY lays down the halter, takes off his old coat, and puts on a newer one of the same flannel]*

*Bartley [to NORA]* Is she coming to the pier?

*Nora [looking out]* She's passing the green head and letting fall her sails

*Bartley [getting his purse and tobacco]* I'll have half an hour to go down, and you'll see me coming again in two days, or in three days, or maybe in four days if the wind is bad

*Maurya [turning round to the fire, and putting her shawl over her head]* Isn't it a hard and cruel man won't hear a word from an old woman, and she holding him from the sea?

*Cathleen* It's the life of a young man to be going on the sea, and who would listen to an old woman with one thing and she saying it over?

*Bartley [taking the halter]* I must go now quickly I'll ride down on the red mare, and the gray pony'll run behind me The blessing of God on you

*[He goes out]*

*Maurya [crying out as he is in the door]* He's gone now, God spare us, and we'll not see him again He's gone now, and when the black night is falling I'll have no son left me in the world

*Cathleen* Why wouldn't you give him your blessing and he looking round in the door? Isn't it sorrow enough is on every one in this house without your sending him out with an unlucky word behind him, and a hard word in his ear?

*[MAURYA takes up the tongs and begins raking the fire aimlessly without looking round]*

*Nora [turning towards her]* You're taking away the turf from the cake

*Cathleen [crying out]* The Son of God forgive us, Nora, we're after forgetting his bit of bread

*[She comes over to the fire]*

*Nora* And it's destroyed he'll be going till dark night, and he after eating nothing since the sun went up

*Cathleen [turning the cake out of the oven]* It's destroyed he'll be, surely There's no sense left on any person in a house where an old woman will be talking for ever

*[MAURYA sways herself on her stool]*  
*Cathleen [cutting off some of the bread]*

and rolling it in a cloth, to MAURYA] Let you go down now to the spring well and give him this and he passing You'll see him then and the dark word will be broken, and you can say "God speed you," the way he'll be easy in his mind

Maurya [taking the bread] Will I be in it as soon as himself?

Cathleen If you go now quickly

Maurya [standing up unsteadily] It's hard set I am to walk

Cathleen [looking at her anxiously] Give her the stick, Nora, or maybe she'll slip on the big stones

Nora What stick?

Cathleen The stick Michael brought from Connemara

Maurya [taking a stick Nora gives her] In the big world the old people do be leaving things after them for their sons and children, but in this place it is the young men do be leaving things behind for them that do be old

[She goes out slowly]

[NORA goes over to the ladder]

Cathleen Wait, Nora, maybe she'd turn back quickly She's that sorry, God help her, you wouldn't know the thing she'd do

Nora Is she gone round by the bush?

Cathleen [looking out] She's gone now Throw it down quickly, for the Lord knows when she'll be out of it again

Nora [getting the bundle from the loft] The young priest said he'd be passing tomorrow, and we might go down and speak to him below if it's Michael's they are surely

Cathleen [taking the bundle] Did he say what way they were found?

Nora [coming down] "There were two men," says he, "and they rowing round with poteen before the cocks crowed, and the oar of one of them caught the body, and they passing the black cliffs of the north"

Cathleen [trying to open the bundle] Give me a knife, Nora, the string's perished with the salt water, and there's a black knot on it you wouldn't loosen in a week

Nora [giving her a knife] I've heard tell it was a long way to Donegal

Cathleen [cutting the string] It is surely There was a man in here a while ago—the man sold us that knife—and he said if you set off walking from the rocks beyond, it would be seven days you'd be in Donegal

Nora And what time would a man take, and he floating?

[CATHLEEN opens the bundle and takes out a bit of a stocking They look at them eagerly]

Cathleen [in a low voice] The Lord spare us, Nora! isn't it a queer hard thing to say if it's his they are surely?

Nora I'll get his shirt off the hook the way we can put the one flannel on the other [She looks through some clothes hanging in the corner] It's not with them, Cathleen, and where will it be?

Cathleen I'm thinking Bartley put it on him in the morning, for his own shirt was heavy with the salt in it [pointing to the corner] There's a bit of a sleeve was of the same stuff Give me that and it will do

[NORA brings it to her and they compare the flannel]

Cathleen It's the same stuff, Nora, but if it is itself aren't there great rolls of it in the shops of Galway, and isn't it many another man may have a shirt of it as well as Michael himself?

Nora [who has taken up the stocking and counted the stitches, crying out] It's Michael, Cathleen, it's Michael, God spare his soul, and what will herself say when she hears this story, and Bartley on the sea?

Cathleen [taking the stocking] It's a plain stocking

Nora It's the second one of the third pair I knitted, and I put up three score stitches, and I dropped four of them

Cathleen [counts the stitches] It's that number is in it [Crying out] Ah, Nora, isn't it a bitter thing to think of him floating that way to the far north, and no one to keen him but the black hags that do be flying on the sea?

Nora [swinging herself round, and throwing out her arms on the clothes] And isn't it a pitiful thing when there is nothing left of a man who was a great rower and fisher, but a bit of an old shirt and a plain stocking?

Cathleen [after an instant] Tell me is herself coming, Nora? I hear a little sound on the path

Nora [looking out] She is, Cathleen She's coming up to the door

Cathleen Put these things away before she'll come in Maybe it's easier she'll be after giving her blessing to Bartley, and we

won't let on we've heard anything the time he's on the sea

Nora [*helping CATHLEEN to close the bundle*] We'll put them here in the corner

[*They put them into a hole in the chimney corner CATHLEEN goes back to the spinning-wheel*]

Nora Will she see it was crying I was?

Cathleen Keep your back to the door the way the light'll not be on you

[*NORA sits down at the chimney corner, with her back to the door. MAURYA comes in very slowly, without looking at the girls, and goes over to her stool at the other side of the fire The cloth with the bread is still in her hand The girls look at each other, and NORA points to the bundle of bread*]

Cathleen [*after spinning for a moment*] You didn't give him his bit of bread?

[*MAURYA begins to keen softly, without turning round*]

Cathleen Did you see him riding down?

[*MAURYA goes on keening*]

Cathleen [*a little impatiently*] God forgive you, isn't it a better thing to raise your voice and tell what you seen, than to be making lamentation for a thing that's done? Did you see Bartley, I'm saying to you?

Maurya [*with a weak voice*] My heart's broken from this day

Cathleen [*as before*] Did you see Bartley?

Maurya I seen the fearfulest thing

Cathleen [*leaves her wheel and looks out*] God forgive you, he's riding the mare now over the green head, and the gray pony behind him

Maurya [*starts, so that her shawl falls back from her head and shows her white tossed hair, with a frightened voice*] The gray pony behind him.

Cathleen [*coming to the fire*] What is it ails you, at all?

Maurya [*speaking very slowly*] I've seen the fearfulest thing any person has seen, since the day Bride Dara seen the dead man with the child in his arms

Cathleen and Nora Uah

[*They crouch down in front of the old woman at the fire*]

Nora Tell us what it is you seen

Maurya I went down to the spring well, and I stood there saying a prayer to myself Then Bartley came along, and he riding on the red mare with the gray pony be-

hind him [*She puts up her hands, as if to hide something from her eyes*] The Son of God spare us, Nora!

Cathleen What is it you seen

Maurya I seen Michael himself

Cathleen [*speaking softly*] You did not, mother It wasn't Michael you seen, for his body is after being found in the far north, and he's got a clean burial by the grace of God

Maurya [*a little defiantly*]. I'm after seeing him this day, and he riding and galloping Bartley came first on the red mare, and I tried to say "God speed you," but something choked the words in my throat He went by quickly, and "the blessing of God on you," says he, and I could say nothing I looked up then, and I was crying, at the gray pony, and there was Michael upon it—with fine clothes on him, and new shoes on his feet

Cathleen [*begins to keen*]. It's destroyed we are from this day It's destroyed, surely

Nora Didn't the young priest say the Almighty God wouldn't leave her destitute with no son living?

Maurya [*in a low voice, but clearly*] It's little the like of him knows of the sea Bartley will be lost now, and let you call in Eamon and make me a good coffin out of the white boards, for I won't live after them I've had a husband, and a husband's father, and six sons in this house—six fine men, though it was a hard birth I had with every one of them and they coming to the world—and some of them were found and some of them were not found, but they're gone now the lot of them There were Stephen, and Shawn, were lost in the great wind, and found after in the Bay of Gregory of the Golden Mouth, and carried up the two of them on the one plank, and in by that door

[*She pauses for a moment, the girls start as if they heard something through the door that is half open behind them*]

Nora [*in a whisper*] Did you hear that, Cathleen? Did you hear a noise in the north-east?

Cathleen [*in a whisper*] There's some one after crying out by the seashore

Maurya [*continues without hearing anything*] There was Sheamus and his father and his own father again, were lost in a dark night, and not a stick or sign was seen of

them when the sun went up There was Patch after was drowned out of a curagh that turned over I was sitting here with Bartley, and he a baby, lying on my two knees, and I seen two women, and three women, and four women coming in, and they crossing themselves, and not saying a word I looked out then, and there were men coming after them, and they holding a thing in the half of a red sail, and water dripping out of it—it was a dry day, Nora—and leaving a track to the door

*[She pauses again with her hand stretched out towards the door It opens softly and old women begin to come in, crossing themselves on the threshold, and kneeling down in front of the stage with red petticoats over their heads]*

*Maurya [half in a dream, to CATHLEEN]* Is it Patch, or Michael, or what is it at all?

*Cathleen* Michael is after being found in the far north, and when he is found there how could he be here in this place?

*Maurya* There does be a power of young men floating round in the sea, and what way would they know if it was Michael they had, or another man like him, for when a man is nine days in the sea, and the wind blowing, it's hard set his own mother would be to say what man was it

*Cathleen* It's Michael, God spare him, for they're after sending us a bit of his clothes from the far north

*[She reaches out and hands MAURYA the clothes that belonged to MICHAEL]*

*MAURYA stands up slowly, and takes them in her hands NORA looks out]*

*Nora* They're carrying a thing among them and there's water dripping out of it and leaving a track by the big stones

*Cathleen [in a whisper to the women who have come in]* Is it Bartley it is?

*One of the Women* It is surely, God rest his soul

*[Two younger women come in and pull out the table Then men carry in the body of BARTLEY, laid on a plank, with a bit of a sail over it, and lay it on the table]*

*Cathleen [to the women, as they are doing so]* What way was he drowned?

*One of the Women* The gray pony knocked him into the sea, and he was washed out where there is a great surf on the white rocks

*[MAURYA has gone over and knelt down at the head of the table The women are keening softly and swaying themselves with a slow movement CATHLEEN and NORA kneel at the other end of the table The men kneel near the door]*

*Maurya [raising her head and speaking as if she did not see the people around her]* They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me I'll have no call now to be up crying and praying when the wind breaks from the south, and you can hear the surf is in the east, and the surf is in the west, making a great stir with the two noises, and they hitting one on the other I'll have no call now to be going down and getting Holy Water in the dark nights after Samhain, and I won't care what way the sea is when the other women will be keening *[To NORA]* Give me the Holy Water, Nora, there's a small sup still on the dresser

*[NORA gives it to her]*

*Maurya [drops MICHAEL'S clothes across BARTLEY'S feet, and sprinkles the Holy Water over him]* It isn't that I haven't prayed for you, Bartley, to the Almighty God It isn't that I haven't said prayers in the dark night till you wouldn't know what I'd be saying, but it's a great rest I'll have now, and it's time surely It's a great rest I'll have now, and great sleeping in the long nights after Samhain, if it's only a bit of wet flour we do have to eat, and maybe a fish that would be stinking

*[She kneels down again, crossing herself, and saying prayers under her breath]*

*Cathleen [to an old man]* Maybe yourself and Eamon would make a coffin when the sun rises We have fine white boards herself bought, God help her, thinking Michael would be found, and I have a new cake you can eat while you'll be working

*The Old Man [looking at the boards]* Are there nails with them?

*Cathleen* There are not, Colum, we didn't think of the nails

*Another Man* It's a great wonder she wouldn't think of the nails, and all the coffins she's seen made already

*Cathleen* It's getting old she is, and broken

*[MAURYA stands up again very slowly and spreads out the pieces of MI-*



MICHAEL'S clothes beside the body, sprinkling them with the last of the Holy Water]

Nora [*in a whisper to CATHLEEN*] She's quiet now and easy, but the day Michael was drowned you could hear her crying out from this to the spring well It's fonder she was of Michael, and would any one have thought that?

Cathleen [*slowly and clearly*] An old woman will be soon tired with anything she will do, and isn't it nine days herself is after crying and keening, and making great sorrow in the house?

Maurya [*puts the empty cup mouth downwards on the table, and lays her hands together on BARTLEY'S feet*] They're all together this time, and the end is come May the Almighty God have mercy on Bartley's

soul, and on Michael's soul, and on the souls of Sheamus and Patch, and Stephen and Shawn [*bending her head*], and may He have mercy on my soul, Nora, and on the soul of every one is left living in the world

[*She pauses, and the keen rises a little more loudly from the women, then sinks away*]

Maurya [*continuing*] Michael has a clean burial in the far north, by the grace of the Almighty God Bartley will have a fine coffin out of the white boards, and a deep grave surely What more can we want than that? No man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied

[*She kneels down again and the curtain falls slowly*]

THE END

**THE THUNDERBOLT**

By ARTHUR W PINERO

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## ARTHUR W PINERO AND HIS PLAYS

ARTHUR WING PINERO was born in London in 1855. He studied law in his father's office, but soon found that profession uncongenial, and, when he was nineteen years old, became an actor. A year later he began to write plays in one act to serve as curtain-raisers, and soon he was writing longer plays that began to establish his reputation. He left the stage, and for fifty years gave his time to playwriting. He was knighted by King Edward VII in 1909, and died in 1934.

For at least twenty years, say from 1890 to 1910, Pinero shared with Henry Arthur Jones the leadership of English drama. His formerly immense prestige has now yielded to what seems undue depreciation. It is said that he seemed great only in the light of the poverty of English drama a generation ago and that he was never more than a clever technician. Such depreciation is surely unjustifiable. Though Pinero is perhaps not a great dramatist, he is a very considerable one even when compared with Shaw, Galsworthy, Barrie, Granville-Barker, and others, who have overshadowed him.

Within his long career Pinero wrote forty-one long plays and ten plays in one act, and perfected a technique in many kinds of drama. To be a master craftsman is no small achievement, however patronizing may be the present-day attitude toward the "mere technician." Such technique as Pinero's is not easily acquired, and cannot be acquired at all except by a dramatist of rare and genuine capacity. Such a farce as *The Magistrate*, such a comedy of sentiment as *Trelawny of the Wells*, such a comedy of manners as *The Gay Lord Quex*, such an ironic comedy as *The Thunderbolt*, such a serious play of character as *Iris*, such a tragedy as *Mid-Channel*, hold their own even in the light of the authentic and varied product of Pinero's younger contemporaries.

Aside from the intrinsic merit of his best plays, Pinero is significant as the chief influence in the introduction of the modern spirit in English drama. With Jones, he was the first to feel and exemplify the influence of Ibsen. He represented an effort to use the actual material of human life as the stuff of drama, to present it sincerely, and to evolve a technique consonant with this matter and this purpose. His *Profligate* (1889) was the first English play to discard the soliloquy and the aside. His *Second Mrs Tanqueray* (1893) was the first strikingly successful problem play on the English stage.

It is true that Pinero had little that is new to tell of human nature. His characters are sometimes mere types, rarely are they distinguished or especially interesting. Yet his range of characterization was remarkably wide, and often he created a character entirely real and convincing. Such are *Iris*, *Zoe Blundell* in *Mid-Channel*, *Letty*, *Sophie Fulgarney* in *The Gay Lord Quex*, and most of the characters in *The Thunderbolt*. His style, although usually adequate, generally lacked the final distinction of great writing. He was capable, even in his later plays, of stilted, pseudo-literary dialogue—such speech as never was spoken by mortal man—or woman, either. But at its best his style is natural and appropriate, is flexible and varied, and often possesses humor, wit, and point.

Each one of his plays, which depict many phases of English life, creates a special atmosphere, in which his persons live and move and have their being. He built various little complete and self-consistent worlds. In general he avoided mere theatricality, though sometimes he catered to his audience by introducing matter extraneous to the theme of the play and its necessities, such, for instance, as the slight love-story, as well as the two charming but incredible children, in *The Thunderbolt*.

Though both *Iris* and *Mid-Channel* are more moving plays, though *The Gay Lord Quex* is theatrically more effective, *The Thunderbolt* is, all things considered, Pinero's masterpiece. Its story is probable, its persons are real, its action is purely the outcome of character, its humor is inherent in its persons and its situations, its technique, including most of its dialogue, is admirable. The maker of such a play cannot, without an affront to common-sense, be termed a "mere technician."

*The Thunderbolt* was first produced in London, on May 9, 1908. It was first produced in New York on November 12, 1910, at the New Theatre.

## CHARACTERS

JAMES MORTIMORE  
ANN, *his wife*  
STEPHEN MORTIMORE  
LOUISA, *his wife*  
THADDEUS MORTIMORE  
PHYLLIS, *his wife*  
JOYCE } *The Thaddeus Mortimores' children*  
CYRIL }  
COLONEL PONTING  
ROSE, *his wife, née Mortimore*  
HELEN THORNHILL  
THE REV GEORGE TRIST  
MR VALLANCE, *solicitor, of Singlehampton*  
MR ELKIN, *solicitor, of Linchpool*  
MR DENYER, *a house-agent*  
HEATH, *a man-servant*  
*A servant girl at "Nelson Villas"*  
*Two servant girls at "Ivanhoe"*

*The action takes place at the present day in Linchpool, a city of the Midlands, and in the town of Singlehampton*

# THE THUNDERBOLT

## ACT ONE

A large, oblong room, situated on the ground floor and furnished as a library, in the residence of the late Edward Mortimore, in Lanchpool

At the back are three sashed windows, slightly recessed, with venetian blinds. There is a chair in each recess. At the further end of the right-hand wall a door opens from the hall, the remaining part of the wall being occupied by a long dwarf-bookcase. This bookcase finishes at each end with a cupboard, and on the top of each cupboard stands a lamp. The keys of the cupboards are in their locks.

On the left-hand side of the room, in the middle of the wall, is a fireplace with a fender-stool before it, and on either side of the fireplace there is a tall bookcase with glazed doors. A high-backed armchair faces the fireplace at the further end. A smoking-table with the usual accessories, a chair, and a settee stand at the nearer end of the fireplace, a few feet from the wall.

Almost in the centre of the room there is a big knee-hole writing-table with a lamp upon it. On the further side of the table is a writing-chair. Another chair stands beside the table.

On the right, near the dwarf-bookcase, there is a circular library-table on which are strewn books, newspapers, and magazines. Round this table a settee and three chairs are arranged.

The furniture and decorations, without exhibiting any special refinement of taste, are rich and massive.

The venetian blinds are down, and the room is in semi-darkness. What light there is proceeds from the bright sunshine visible through the slats.

Seated about the room, as if waiting for somebody to arrive, are JAMES and ANN MORTIMORE, STEPHEN and LOUISA, THADDEUS and PHYLLIS, and COLONEL PONTING and ROSE. The ladies are wearing their hats and gloves. Everybody is in the sort of black which people hurriedly muster while regular mourning is in the making—in the case of the MORTIMORES, the black being

added to apparel of a less sombre kind. All speak in subdued voices.

Rose [a lady of forty-four, fashionably dressed and coiffured and with a suspiciously blooming complexion—on the settee on the left, fanning herself] Oh, the heat! I'm stifled.

Louisa [on the right—forty-six, a spare, thin-voiced woman] Mayn't we have a window open?

Ann [beside the writing-table—a stolid, corpulent woman of fifty] I don't think we ought to have a window open.

James [at the writing-table—a burly, thick-set man, a little older than his wife, with iron-gray hair and beard and a crape band round his sleeve] Phew! Why not, mother?

Ann It isn't usual in a house of mourning—except in the room where the—

Ponting [in the armchair before the fireplace—fifty-five, short, stout, apoplectic] Rubbish! [Dabbing his brow] I beg your pardon—it's like the Black Hole of Calcutta.

Thaddeus [rising from the settee on the right, where he is sitting with PHYLLIS—a meek, care-worn man of two-and-forty] Shall I open one a little way?

Stephen [on the further side of the library-table—forty-nine, bald, stooping, with red rims to his eyes, wearing spectacles] Do, Tad.

[THADDEUS goes to the window on the right and opens it.]

Thaddeus [from behind the venetian blind] Here's a fly.

James [taking out his watch as he rises] That'll be Crake. Half-past eleven. He's in good time.

Thaddeus [looking into the street] It isn't Crake. It's a young fellow.

James Young fellow?

Thaddeus [emerging] It's Crake's partner.

James His partner?

Stephen Crake has sent Vallance.

James What's he done that for? Why hasn't he come himself? This young man doesn't know anything about our family.

Ann He'll know the law, James.

James Oh, the law's clear enough, mother

[After a short silence, HEATH, a middle-aged manservant, appears, followed by VALLANCE VALLANCE is a young man of about five-and-thirty]

Heath Mr Vallance

Jan : [advancing to VALLANCE as HEATH retires] Good-morning

Vallance Good-morning [Inquiringly] Mr Mortimore?

James James Mortimore

Vallance Mr Crake had your telegram yesterday evening

James Yes, he answered it, telling us to expect him

Vallance He's obliged to go to London on business He's very sorry He thought I'd better run through

James. Oh, well—glad to see you [Introducing the others] My wife My sister Rose—Mrs Ponting My sister-in-law, Mrs Stephen Mortimore My sister-in-law, Mrs Thaddeus My brother Stephen

Stephen [rising] Mr Vallance was pointed out to me at the Institute the other night [Shaking hands with VALLANCE] You left by the eight forty-seven?

Vallance Yes, I changed at Mirtlesfield

James Colonel Ponting—my brother-in-law.

[PONTING, who has risen, nods to VALLANCE and joins ROSE]

My younger brother, Thaddeus

Thaddeus [having moved away to the left] How d'ye do?

James [putting VALLANCE into the chair before the writing-table and switching on the light of the lamp] You sit yourself down there [To everybody] Who's to be spokesman?

Stephen [joining LOUISA] Oh, you explain matters, Jim

[LOUISA makes way for STEPHEN, transferring herself to another chair so that her husband may be nearer VALLANCE]

James [to PONTING] Colonel?

Ponting [sitting by ROSE] Certainly, you do the talking, Mortimore

James [sitting, in the middle of the room, astride a chair, which he fetches from the window on the right] Well, Mr Vallance, the reason we wired you yesterday—wired Mr Crake, rather—asking him to meet us here this morning, is this Something has happened here in Linchpool which makes

it necessary for us to obtain a little legal assistance

Vallance Yes?

James Not that we anticipate legal difficulties, whichever way the affair shapes At the same time, we consider it advisable that we should be represented by our own solicitor—a solicitor who has our interests at heart, and nobody's interests but ours [Looking round] Isn't that it?

Stephen We want our interests watched—our interests exclusively

Ponting Watched—that's it I'm speaking for my wife, of course

Rose [with a languid drawl] Yes, watched We should like our interests watched

James [to VALLANCE] These are the facts I'll start with a bit of history We Mortimores are one of the oldest, and, I'm bold enough to say, one of the most respected, families in Singlehampton You're a newcomer to the town, so I'm obliged to tell you things I shouldn't have to tell Crake, who's been the family's solicitor for years Four generations of Mortimores—I'm not counting our youngsters, who make a fifth—four generations of Mortimores have been born in Singlehampton, and the majority of 'em have earned their daily bread there

Vallance Indeed?

James Yes, sir, indeed Now, then [Pointing to the writing-table] Writing-paper's in the middle drawer

[VALLANCE takes a sheet of paper from the drawer and arranges it before him] My dear father and mother—both passed away—had five children, four sons and a daughter I'm the second son, then comes Stephen, then Rose—Mrs Colonel Ponting, then Thaddeus You see us all round you.

Vallance [selecting a pen] Five children, you said?

James Five The eldest of us was Ned—Edward—

Stephen Edward Thomas Mortimore

James Edward cut himself adrift from Singlehampton six-and-twenty years ago He died at a quarter-past three yesterday morning

Stephen Up-stairs

James We're in his house

Stephen We lay him to rest in the cemetery here on Monday

Vallance [sympathetically] I was read-

ing in the train, in one of the Linchpool papers—

James Oh, they've got it in all their papers

Vallance Mr Mortimore, the brewer?

James The same Aye, he was a big man in Linchpool

Stephen A very big man

James And, what's more, a very wealthy one, there's no doubt about that Well, we can't find a will, Mr Vallance

Vallance Really?

James To all appearances, my brother's left no will—died intestate

Vallance Unmarried?

James Unmarried, a bachelor Now, then, sir—just to satisfy my good lady—in the event of no will cropping up, what becomes of my poor brother's property?

Vallance It depends upon what the estate consists of. As much of it as is real estate would go to the heir-at-law—in this instance, the eldest surviving brother

Ponting [impatiently] Yes, yes, but it's all personal estate—personal estate, every bit of it

James [to VALLANCE] The Colonel's right It's personal estate entirely, so we gather The Colonel and I were pumping Elkin's managing-clerk about it this morning

Vallance, Elkin?

James Elkin, Son, and Tullis

Stephen Mr Elkin has acted as my poor brother's solicitor for the last fifteen years

James And he's never made a will for Ned

Stephen Nor heard my brother mention the existence of one

James [to VALLANCE] Well? In the case of personal estate—?

Vallance In that case, equal division between next-of-kin

James That's us—me, and my brothers, and my sister?

Vallance Yes

James [to ANN] What did I tell you, Ann? [To the rest] What did I tell everybody?

[STEPHEN polishes his spectacles, and PONTING pulls at his moustache, vigorously ROSE, ANN, and LOUISA resettle themselves in their seats with great contentment]

Vallance [writing] "Edward"—[looking up] Thomas? [JAMES nods] "Thomas—Mortimore—"

James Of 3 Cannon Row and Horton Lane—

Stephen Horton Lane is where the brewery is

James Linchpool, brewer

Stephen "Gentleman" is the more correct description The business was converted into a company in nineteen-hundred-and-four

Louisa Gentleman, ah! What a gentlemanly man he was!

Ann A perfect gentleman in every respect.

Rose Most gentlemanlike, poor dear thing

Ponting Must have been I never saw him—but must have been

James [to VALLANCE]. Gentleman, deceased—

Stephen. Died, June the twentieth—

James Aged fifty-three Two years my senior

Vallance [with due mournfulness] No older? [Writing] You are James—

James James Henry "Ivanhoe," Claybrook Road, and Victoria Yard, Singlehampton, builder and contractor

Ann My husband is a parish guardian and a rural-district councilman

James Never mind that, mother

Ann Eight years treasurer of the Institute, and one of the founders of the Singlehampton and Claybrook Temperance League

Louisa Stephen was one of the founders of the League, too—weren't you, Stephen?

James [to VALLANCE] Stephen Philip Mortimore, 11 The Crescent, and 32 King Street, Singlehampton, printer and publisher, editor and proprietor of our Singlehampton Times and Mirror

Louisa Author of the History of Singlehampton and its Surroundings—

Stephen All right, Lou

Louisa With Ordnance Map.

James Rose Emily Rackstraw Ponting—

Rose My mother was a Rackstraw

James Wife of Arthur Everard Ponting, West Sussex Regiment, Colonel, retired, 17a Coningsby Place, South Belgravia, London That's the lot.

Ann No—

James Oh, there's Tad [To VALLANCE] Thaddeus John Mortimore—

[THADDEUS is standing, looking on, with his elbows resting upon the back of the chair before the fireplace]

Thaddeus Don't forget me Jim



*James* 6 Nelson Villas, Singlehampton, professor of music Any further particulars, Mr Vallance?

*Vallance* [*finishing writing and leaning back in his chair*] May I ask, Mr Mortimore, what terms you and your sister and brothers were on with the late Mr Mortimore?

*James* Terms?

*Vallance* What I mean is, your late brother was a man of more than ordinary intelligence, he must have known who his estate would benefit, in the event of his dying intestate

*James* [*with a nod*] Aye

*Vallance* My point is, was he on such terms with you as to make it reasonably probable that he should have desired his estate to pass to those who are here?

*James* [*rubbing his beard*] Reasonably probable?

*Stephen* Certainly.

*Ponting* In my opinion, certainly

*James* [*looking at the others*] He sent for us when he was near his end—

*Stephen* Showing that old sores were healed—thoroughly healed—as far as he was concerned

*Vallance* Old sores?

*James* He wouldn't have done that if he hadn't had a fondness for his family—eh?

*Ann* Of course not

*Louisa* Of course he wouldn't

*Ponting* Quite so.

*Vallance* Then, I take it, there had been—er—?

*Stephen* An estrangement Yes, there had

*James* Oh, I'm not one for keeping anything in the background Up to a day or two before his death, we hadn't been on what you'd call terms with my brother for many years, Mr Vallance

*Stephen* Unhappily

*James* *De Mortuis*—how's it go—?

*Stephen* *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*

*James* Well, plain English is good enough for me [*To VALLANCE*] But I don't attempt to deny it—at one time of his life my poor brother Edward was a bit of a scamp, sir

*Stephen* A little rackety—a little wild Young men will be young men

*Ann* [*shaking her head*] I've a grown-up son myself

*Louisa* [*inconsequently*] And there are two sides to every question I always say—don't I, Stephen—?

*Stephen* Yes, yes, yes

*Louisa* There are two sides to every question

*James* [*to VALLANCE*] No, sir, after Edward cleared out of Singlehampton, we didn't see him again, any of us, till about fifteen years back Then he came to settle here, in this city, and bought Cordingly's brewery

*Louisa* Only forty miles away from his birthplace

*Stephen* Forty-two miles

*Louisa* That was fate

*Stephen* Chance

*Louisa* I don't know the difference between chance and fate

*Stephen* [*irritably*] No, you don't, Lou

*James* Then some of us used to knock up against him occasionally—generally on the line, at Mirtlesfield junction But it was only a nod, or a how-d'ye-do, we got from him, and it never struck us till last Tuesday morning that he kept a soft corner in his heart for us all

*Vallance* Tuesday—?

*Ann* First post

*James* We had a letter from Elkin, telling us that poor Ned was seriously ill, and saying that he was willing to shake hands with the principal members of the family, if they chose to come through to Linchpool.

*Stephen* Thank God we came.

*James* Aye, thank God

*Ann and Louisa.* Thank God

*Rose* [*affectedly*] It will always be a sorrow to me that I didn't get down till it was too late I shall never cease to reproach myself

*James* [*indulgently*] Oh, well, you're a woman o' fashion, Rose

*Rose* [*with a simper*] Still, if I had guessed the end was as near as it was, I'd have given up my social engagements without a murmur [*Appealing to PONTING*] Toby—!

*Ponting* Without a murmur—without a murmur, both of us would

*Vallance* [*rising, putting his notes into his pocketbook as he speaks*]. I think it would perhaps be as well that I should meet Mr Elkin

*Stephen* That's the plan

[JAMES and PONTING rise]

*James* Just what I was going to propose

*Stephen* Elkin knows we have communicated with our solicitor.

*James* [looking at his watch] He's gone around to the Safe Deposit Company in Lemon Street

*Stephen* His latest idea is that my brother may have rented a safe there

*Ponting* Preposterous Never heard anything more grotesque

*James* The old gentleman will want to drag the river Lunch next

*Ponting* As if a man of wealth and position, with safes and strong-rooms of his own, would deposit his will in a place of that sort 'Pon my word, it's outrageous of Elkin

*Stephen* It does seem rather extravagant  
*Rose* Absurd

*Vallance* [coming forward] We must remember that it's the duty of all concerned to use every possible means of discovery [To JAMES] Your brother had an office at the brewery?

*James* Elkin and I turned that inside-out yesterday

*Stephen* In the presence of Mr Holt and Mr Friswell, two of the directors

*Vallance* And his bank—?

*James* London City and Midland Four tin boxes We've been through 'em

*Stephen* The most likely place of deposit, I should have thought, was the safe in this room

*Ponting* Exactly The will would have been there if there had been a will at all

[JAMES switches on the light of the lamp which stands above the cupboard at the further end of the dwarf-bookcase]

*James* [opening the cupboard and revealing a safe] Yes, this is where my brother's private papers are

*Stephen* This was his library and sanctum

*James* [listening as he shuts the cupboard door] Hallo! [Opening the room door a few inches and peering into the hall] Here is Elkin

[There is a slight general movement denoting intense interest and suspense ANN gets to her feet JAMES closes the door and comes forward a little—grimly]

Well! Hey! I wonder whether he's found anything in Lemon Street?

*Ponting* [clutching Rose's shoulder and dropping back into his chair—under his breath] Good God!

*Ann* [staring at her husband] James—!  
*James* [sternly] Go and sit down, mother  
[ANN retreats and seats herself beside ROSE]

If he has, we ought to feel glad, that's how we ought to feel

*Stephen* [resentfully] Of course we ought. That's how we shall feel

*James* Poor old Ned! It's his wishes we've got to consider—[returning to the door] his wishes [Opening the door again] Come in, Mr Elkin Waiting for you, sir

[He admits ELKIN, who is a gray-haired, elderly man of sixty He presents VALLANCE]

Mr Vallance—Crake and Vallance, Singlehampton, our solicitors

[ELKIN advances and shakes hands with VALLANCE]

Mr Vallance has just run over to see how we're getting on

*Elkin* [to VALLANCE, genially] I don't go often to Singlehampton nowadays I recollect the time, Mr Vallance, when the whole of the south side of the town was meadow-land Would you believe it—meadow-land! And where they've built the new hospital, old Dicky Dunn, the farmer, used to graze his cattle

[JAMES touches his sleeve He turns to JAMES]

Eh?

*James* [rather huskily] Excuse me Any luck?

*Elkin* Luck?

*James* In Lemon Street Find anything?

*Elkin* [shaking his head] No There is nothing there in your brother's name

[Again there is a general movement, but this time of relief]

It was worth trying

*James* Oh, it was worth trying

*Stephen* [heartily] Everything's worth trying

*Ponting* [jumping up] Everything Mustn't leave a stone unturned

[The strain being over, ROSE and ANN rise and go to the fireplace, where PONTING joins them THADDEUS moves away and seats himself at the centre window]

*Elkin* [sitting beside the writing-table] This is a puzzling state of affairs Mr Vallance

*Vallance* Oh, come, Mr Elkin!

*Elkin* I don't want to appear uncivil to these ladies and gentlemen—very puzzling

*Vallance* Scarcely what one would have expected, perhaps, but what is there that's puzzling about it?

*James* [*standing by ELKIN*] People have died intestate before to-day, Mr Elkin

*Stephen* It's a common enough occurrence

*Vallance* [*to ELKIN*] I understand you acted for the late Mr Mortimer for a great many years?

*Elkin* Ever since he came to Linchpool

*Vallance* His most prosperous years

[*ELKIN assents silently*]

*James* When he was making money to leave

*Vallance* [*to ELKIN*] And the subject of a will was never broached between you?

*Elkin* I won't say that I've thrown out a hint or two at different times

*Vallance* Without any response on his part?

*Elkin* Without any practical response, I admit

[*JAMES and STEPHEN shrug their shoulders*]

But he must have employed other solicitors previous to my connection with him I can't trace his having done so, but no commercial man gets to eight-and-thirty without having something to do with us chaps

*Vallance* [*sitting on the settee on the left*] Assuming a will of long standing, he may have destroyed it, may he not, recently?

*Elkin* Recently?

*Vallance* Quite recently Here we have a man at variance with his family and dangerously ill What do we find him doing? We find him summoning his relatives to his bedside and becoming reconciled to them—

*James* Completely reconciled

*Stephen* Completely

*Elkin* [*to VALLANCE*] At my persuasion I put pressure on him to send for his belongings

*Vallance* Indeed? Granting that, isn't it reasonable to suppose that, subsequent to this reconciliation—?

*Elkin* Oh, no he destroyed no document of any description after he took to his bed That I've ascertained

*Vallance* Well, theorizing is of no use, is it? We have to deal with the simple fact, Mr Elkin

*James* Yes, that's all we have to deal with

*Stephen* The simple fact

*Elkin* No will

[*PONTING, with the rest, has been following the conversation between ELKIN and VALLANCE*]

*Ponting* No will

*Elkin* [*after a pause*] Do you know, Mr Vallance, there is one thing I shouldn't have been unprepared for?

*Vallance* What?

*Elkin* A will drawn by another solicitor, behind my back, *during* my association with Mr Mortimore

*Vallance* Behind your back?

*Elkin* He was a most attractive creature—one of the most engaging and one of the ablest, I've ever come across, but he was remarkably secretive with me in matters relating to his private affairs—remarkably secretive

*Vallance* Secretive?

*Elkin* Reserved, if you like Why, it wasn't till a few days before his death—last Saturday—it wasn't till last Saturday that he first spoke to me about this child of his

*Vallance* Child?

*Elkin* This young lady we are going to see presently

*Vallance* [*looking at JAMES and STEPHEN*] Oh, I—I haven't heard anything of her

*Elkin* Bless me, haven't you been told?

*James* [*uncomfortably*] We hadn't got as far as that with Mr Vallance

*Stephen* [*clearing his throat*] Mr Elkin did not think fit to inform us of her existence till yesterday

*James* [*looking at his watch*] Twelve o'clock she's due, isn't she?

*Elkin* [*to JAMES*] You fixed the hour [*TO VALLANCE*] I wrote to her at the same time that I communicated with his brothers Unfortunately, she was away, visiting

*Stephen* She's studying painting at one of these art-schools in Paris

*Elkin* She arrived late last night Mrs Elkin and I received her Only four-and-twenty A nice girl

*Vallance* Is the mother living?

*Elkin* No

*James* The mother was a person of the name of Thornhill

*Stephen* Calling herself Thornhill—some

woman in London She died when the child was quite small

*James* [with a jerk of the head towards the safe] There's a bundle of the mother's letters in the safe

*Elkin* This meeting with the family is my arranging As matters stand, Miss Thornhill is absolutely unprovided for, Mr Vallance And there was the utmost affection between Mr Mortimore and his daughter—as he acknowledged her to be—undoubtedly Now you won't grumble at me for my use of the word "puzzling"?

*Vallance* [looking round] I am sure my clients, should the responsibility ultimately rest with them, will do what is just and fitting with regard to the young lady

*James* More than just—more than just, if it's left to me

*Stephen* We should be only too anxious to behave in a liberal manner, Mr Vallance

*Louisa* We're parents ourselves—all except Colonel and Mrs Ponting

*Ann* My own girl—my Cissy—is nearly four-and-twenty

*Rose* [seated upon the fender-stool] I suppose we should have to make her an allowance of sorts, shouldn't we?

*James* A monthly allowance

*Stephen* Monthly or quarterly

*Ponting* Yes, but this art-school in Paris—you've no conception what that kind of fun runs into

*James* Schooling doesn't go on forever, Colonel

*Ponting* But it'll lead to an atelier—a studio—if you're not careful

*Rose* The art-school could be dropped, surely?

*Stephen* Perhaps the art-school isn't strictly necessary

*Rose* And she has an address in a most expensive quarter of Paris—didn't you say, Jim?

*James* The Colonel says it's a swell locality

*Ponting* Most expensive The father—if he was her father—seems to have squandered money on her

*Stephen* Well, well, we shall see what's to be done

*Ponting* Squandered money on her recklessly

*James* Yes, yes, we'll see, Colonel, we'll see

[PHYLLIS, who has taken no part in

what has been going on, suddenly rises She is a woman of thirty-five, white-faced and faded, but with decided traces of beauty Everybody looks at her in surprise]

*Phyllis* [falteringly] I—I beg your pardon—

*Louisa* [startled] Good gracious me, Phyllis!

*Phyllis* [gaining firmness as she proceeds] I beg your pardon With every respect for Rose and Colonel Ponting, if we come into Edward Mortimore's money, we mustn't let it make an atom of difference to the child

*Louisa* Really, Phyllis!

*Stephen* [stiffly] My dear Phyllis—

*James* [half amused, half contemptuously] Oh, we mustn't, mustn't we, Phyllis?

*Phyllis* He was awfully devoted to her in his lifetime, it turns out Colonel Ponting and Rose ought to remember that

*Ponting* [walking away in umbrage to the window on the left, followed by Rose] Thank you, Mrs Thaddeus

*Thaddeus* [having risen and come to the writing-table] Phyl—Phyl—

*Phyllis* [to JAMES and STEPHEN] Jim—Stephen—you couldn't stint the girl after pocketing your brother's money, you couldn't do it!

*Ann* James—

*James* Eh, mother?

*Ann* I don't think we need to be taught our duty by Phyllis

*Stephen* [rising and going over to the fireplace] Frankly, I don't think we need

*Louisa* [following him] Before Mr Elkin and Mr Vallance!

*Thaddeus* Stephen—Lou—you don't understand Phyl

*James* It isn't for want of plain speaking, Tad

*Thaddeus* [sitting at the writing-table] No, but listen—Jim—

*James* [joining those at the fireplace] Blessed if I've ever been spoken to in this style in my life!

*Thaddeus* Jim, listen If we come into Ned's money, we come into his debts into the bargain There are no assets without liabilities The girl's a debt—a big debt, as it were Well, what does she cost? Five hundred a year? Six—seven—eight hundred a year? What's it matter? What would a thousand a year matter? Whatever Ned

could afford, we could, amongst us Why he should have neglected to make Miss Thornhill independent is a mystery—I'm with you there, Mr Elkin Perhaps his sending for us, and shaking hands with us as he did, was his way of giving her into our charge Heaven knows what was in his mind But this is certain—if it falls to our lot to administer to Ned's estate, we administer, not only to the money, but to the girl, and the art-school, and her comfortable lodgings, and anything else in reason There's nothing offensive in our saying this

*Elkin* Not in the least

*Thaddeus* [*with a deprecating little laugh*] Ha! We don't often put our oar into family discussions, Phyl and I Stephen—[*turning in his chair*] Rosie—

*James* [*looking down on Thaddeus—grinning*]. Hallo, Tad! Why, I've always had the credit of being the speaker o' the family You're developing all of a sudden

[*HEATH enters*]

*Heath* [*looking round the room*] Mrs Thaddeus Mortimore—?

*Thaddeus* [*pointing to PHYLLIS*] Here she is

*Heath* [*in a hushed voice*] Two young ladies from Roper's, to fit Mrs Thaddeus Mortimore with her mourning

*Thaddeus* [*rising*] They weren't ready for Phyllis at ten o'clock [*Over his shoulder, as he joins PHYLLIS at the door*] Hope you don't object to their waiting on her here

*Heath* [*to THADDEUS*] On the first floor sir

[*PHYLLIS and THADDEUS go out HEATH is following them*]

*Vallance* [*to HEATH, rising*] Er— [*To ELKIN*] What's his name?

*Elkin* [*calling*] Heath!

[*HEATH returns*]

*Vallance* [*going to HEATH*] Have you a room where Mr Elkin and I can be alone for a few minutes?

*Heath* There's the dining-room, sir

*Vallance* [*turning to ELKIN*] Shall we have a little talk together?

*Elkin* [*rising*] By all means

*Vallance* [*to the others*] Will you excuse us?

*Elkin* [*taking VALLANCE'S arm*] Come along [*Passing out with VALLANCE—regretfully*] Ah, Heath, the dining-room !

*Heath* [*as he disappears, closing the door*] Yes, Mr Elkin, that's over, sir

[*JAMES has crossed over to the right to watch the withdrawal of ELKIN and VALLANCE*]

*James* What have those two got to say to each other on the quiet in such a deuce of a hurry?

*Ponting* [*coming forward*] My dear good friends, I beg you won't think me too presuming . . .

*James* [*sourly*] What is it, Colonel?

*Ponting* But you mustn't, you really mustn't, allow yourselves to be dictated to—bullied—

*James* Bullied?

*Ponting* Into doing anything that isn't perfectly agreeable to you

*Stephen* You consider we're being bullied, Colonel?

*James* If it comes to bullying—

*Ponting* It has come to bullying, if I'm any judge of bullying First, you have Mr Elkin, a meddlesome, obstructive—

*Stephen* [*sitting at the writing-table*] Oh, he's obviously antagonistic to us—obviously

*Ponting* Of course he is He sniffs a little job of work over this Miss Thornhill It's his policy to cram Miss Thornhill down our throats That's his game

*James* [*between his teeth*] By George !

*Ponting* And then you get Mr Vallance, your own lawyer—

*James* [*sitting in a chair on the right*] Aye, I'm a bit disappointed with Vallance

*Ponting* Dogmatizing about what is just and what is fitting—

*Stephen* Hear hear, Colonel! You don't pay a solicitor to take sides against you

*James* As if we couldn't be trusted to do the fair thing of our own accord!

*Ponting* The upshot being that Miss Thornhill, supported openly by the one, and tacitly by the other, will be marching in here and—and—

*James* Kicking up a rumpus

*Ponting* I shouldn't be surprised

*Louisa* A rumpus! [*Sitting upon the settee on the left*] She wouldn't dare

*Ann* [*rising*] That would be terrible—a rumpus—

*Rose* [*in the middle of the room*] I shouldn't be surprised either You mustn't expect too much, you know, from a girl who's

*Stephen* [*interpreting ROSE'S shrug*] Illegitimate

*Ann* No, I suppose we oughtn't to expect her to be the same as our children

*Ponting* And finally, to cap it all, you have your brother Thaddeus—your brother—

*James* Ha, yes! Tad obliged us with a pretty stiff lecture, didn't he?

*Louisa* So did Phyllis

*Ann* [*seating herself beside LOUISA*] It was Phyllis who began it

*Rose* [*swaying herself to and fro upon the back of the chair next to the writing-table*] Tad's wife! She's a suitable person to be lectured by, I must say

*Stephen* Poor old Tad! He was only trying to excuse her rudeness

*Rose* Just fancy! The two Tads sharing equally with ourselves!

*Stephen* It is curious, at first sight

*Rose* Extraordinary

*Stephen* But, naturally, the law makes no distinctions

*Rose* No It was the lady's method of announcing that she's as good as we are

*James* Tad and his wife with forty or fifty thousand pound, p'raps, to play with! So the world wags

*Rose* Positively maddening

*Louisa* We shall see Phyllis aping us now more than ever

*Ann* And making that boy and girl of hers still more conceited

*Louisa* They needn't let apartments any longer, that's a mercy

*Ann* We shall be spared that disgrace

*James* Strong language, mother!

*Stephen* Hardly disgrace You can't call the curate of their parish church a lodger in the ordinary sense of the term

*Louisa* Phyllis's girl might make a match of it with Mr Trist in a couple of years' time She's fifteen

*Ann* A forward fifteen

*Rose* It's a fairy story. A woman who's brought nothing but the worst of luck to Tad from the day he married her!

*James* The devil's luck

*Stephen* Been his ruin—his ruin professionally—without the shadow of a doubt

*Louisa* Such a good-looking fellow he used to be, too

*Ann* Handsome

*Louisa* [*archly*] It was Tad I fell in love with, Stephen—not with you

*Stephen* And popular He'd have had the conductorship of the choral societies but for

his mistake, Rawlinson would never have had it Councillor Pritchard admitted as much at a committee-meeting

*Ponting* [*seated upon the settee on the right*] Butcher—the wife's father—wasn't he?

*Rose* Just as bad Old Burdock kept a grocer's shop at the corner of East Street  
*Stephen* West Street

*Rose* West Street, was it? She's the common or garden over-educated petty-tradesman's daughter

*James* [*oratorically*] No, no, you can't overeducate, Rose You can wrongly educate—

*Rose* Oh, don't start that, Jim [*To Ponting*] She was a pupil of Tad's

*Stephen* [*holding up his hands*] Marriage—marriage—!

*Louisa* Stephen!

*James* If it isn't the right sort o' marriage!

*Stephen* Poor old Tad!

*James* Rich old Tad to-day, though!  
[*Chuckling*] Ha, ha!

*Rose* [*glancing at the door*] Sssh!

[*THADDEUS returns The others look down their noses or at distant objects*]

*Thaddeus* [*closing the door and advancing*] I—I hope you're not angry with Phyllis

*Stephen* [*resignedly*] Angry?

*Thaddeus* Or with me

*Ann* Anger would be out of place in a house of mourning

*James* Women's tongues, Tad!

*Stephen* Yes, the ladies—they will make mischief

*Louisa* Not every woman, Stephen

*Thaddeus* Phyllis hasn't the slightest desire to make mischief Why on earth should Phyl want to make mischief? [*Sitting in the chair in the middle of the room*] She's a little nervy—a little unstrung, that's what's the matter with Phyllis

*Louisa* There's no cause for her to be specially upset that I can think of

*Ann* She didn't know Edward in the old days as we did

*Thaddeus* No, but being with him on Wednesday night, when the change came—that's affected her very deeply, poor girl, bowled her over [*To Rose*] She helped to nurse him

*Rose* [*indifferently*] One of the nurses cracked up, didn't she?

*James* The night-nurse

*Thaddeus* [*nodding*] Sent word late on Wednesday afternoon that she couldn't attend to her duties

*Stephen* The day-nurse knocking off at eight o'clock! Dreadful!

*Thaddeus* There we were, rushing about all over the place—all over the place—to find a substitute

*James* And no success

*Thaddeus* [*rubbing his knees*] There's where Phyllis came in handy, there's where Phyl came in handy

*Louisa* Phyllis hadn't more than two or three hours of it, while Ann and I were resting, when all's said and done

*Ann* Not more than two or three hours alone, at the outside

*Thaddeus* No, but, as I say, it was during those two or three hours that the change set in. It's been a shock to her

*Louisa* The truth is, Phyllis delights in making a fuss, Tad

*Thaddeus* Phyl!

*Ann* She loves to make a martyr of herself

*Thaddeus* Phyl does!

*Louisa* You delight to make a martyr of her, then, perhaps that's it

*Ann* I suppose you do it to hide her faults

*Louisa* It would be far more sensible of you, Tad, to strive to correct them—

*Ann* If it's not too late—far more sensible

*Louisa* And teach her a different system of managing her home—

*Ann* And how to bring up her children more in keeping with their position—

*Louisa* With less pride and display

*Ann* They treat their *cousins* precisely like dirt

*Louisa* Dirt under the foot

*Ann* Why Phyllis can't be satisfied with a cook-general passes my comprehension—

*Rose* [*wearily*] Oh, shut up!

*James* Steady, mother!

*Thaddeus* [*looking at them all*] Ah, you've never liked Phyllis from the beginning, any of you

*Louisa* Never liked her!

*Thaddeus* Never cottoned to her, never appreciated her. Oh, I know—old Mr Burdock's shop! [*Simply*] Well, Ann! well, Lou; shop or no shop, there's no better

wife—no better woman—breathing than Phyl

*Louisa* One may like a person without being blind to short-comings

*Ann* Nobody's flawless—nobody

*Louisa* There are two sides to every person as well as to every question, I always maintain

*Thaddeus* However, maybe it won't matter so much in the future. It hasn't made things easier for us in the past [*Snapping his fingers softly*] But now—

*Stephen* [*caustically*] Henceforth you and your wife will be above the critical opinion of others, eh, Tad?

*James* Aye, Tad's come into money now. Mind what you're at, mother! Be careful, Lou! Tad's come into money

*Thaddeus* [*in a quiet voice, but clenching his hands tightly*] My God, I hope I have! I'm not a hypocrite, Jim. My God, I hope I have!

[*The door opens and ELKIN appears*]

*Elkin* Miss Thornhill is here

[*There is a general movement. THADDEUS walks away to the fireplace. JAMES, STEPHEN, and PONTING also arise, and ROSE joins PONTING at the library-table. ANN and LOUISA shake out their skirts formidably, their husbands taking up a position near them. HELEN THORNHILL enters, followed by VALLANCE, who closes the door. HELEN is a graceful, brilliant-looking girl, with perfectly refined manners, wearing an elegant traveling-dress. ELKINS presents HELEN*]

Miss Thornhill [*To HELEN, pointing to the group on left*] These gentlemen are the late Mr Mortimore's brothers [*Pointing to ROSE*] His sister

*Helen* [*almost inaudibly*] Oh, yes

*Stephen* [*drawing attention to himself by an uneasy cough*] Stephen

*Ann* [*humbly*] I'm Mrs James

*Louisa* [*in the same tone*] Mrs Stephen

*Rose* [*seating herself on the left of the library-table*] Rose—Mrs Ponting [*Glancing at PONTING*] My husband

*Thaddeus* [*now standing behind the writing-table*] Thaddeus. My wife is up-stairs, trying on her— [*He checks himself and retreats, again sitting at the centre window*]

[*HELEN receives these various announcements with a dignified inclination of the head*]



James [*seating himself at the writing-table, to HELEN*] Tired, I dessay?

Helen A little

Stephen [*bringing forward the armchair from the fireplace*] You weren't in Paris, Mr Elkin tells us, when his letter—?

Helen No, I was nearly a nine hours' journey from Paris, staying with friends at St Etienne

Rose A pity

Louisa Great pity

Helen Mr Elkin's letter was re-posted and reached me on Wednesday I got back to Paris that night

Elkin [*seating himself beside her*] And had a hard day's traveling again yesterday

Stephen [*sitting in the armchair*] She must be worn out

Ann Indeed she must

Ponting [*sitting by ROSE*] Hot weather, too Most exhausting

Elkin [*to HELEN*] And you were out and about this morning with Mrs Elkin before eight, I heard?

Helen She brought me round here

Elkin [*sympathetically*] Ah, yes

James Round here?

[*ELKIN motions significantly towards the ceiling*]

Oh—aye [*After another pause, to HELEN*] When did you see him last—alive?

Helen In April He spent Easter with me [*Unobtrusively opening a little bag which she carries and taking out a handkerchief*] We always spent our holidays together [*Drying her eyes*] I was to have met him at Rouen on the fifteenth of next month, we were going to Etretat

Elkin [*after a further silence*] Er—h'm!—the principal business we are here to discuss is, I presume, the question of Miss Thornhill's future

Helen [*quickly*] Oh, no, please

Elkin No?

Helen If you don't mind, I would rather my future were taken for granted, Mr Elkin, without any discussion

Elkin Taken for granted?

Helen I am no worse off than thousands of other young women who are suddenly thrown upon their own resources I'm a great deal better off than many, for there's a calling already open to me—art My prospects don't daunt me in the least

Elkin No, no, nobody wants to discourage you—

Helen [*interrupting ELKIN*] I confess—I confess I am disappointed—hurt—that father hasn't made even a slight provision for me—not for the money's sake, but because—because I meant so much to him, I've always believed He *would* have made me secure if he had lived longer, I am convinced

Elkin [*soothingly*] Not improbable, not improbable

Helen But I don't intend to let my mind dwell on that What I do intend to think is that, in leaving me with merely my education and the capacity for earning my living, he has done more for my happiness—my real happiness—than if he had left me every penny he possessed With no incentive to work, I might have drifted by and by into an idle, aimless life I *should* have done so

Stephen A very rational view to take of it

Ponting Admirable!

[*There is a nodding of heads and a murmur of approval from the ladies*]

Elkin Very admirable and praiseworthy [*To the others, diplomatically*] But we are not to conclude that Miss Thornhill declines to entertain the idea of some—some arrangement which would enable her to embark upon her artistic career—

Helen Yes, you are I don't need assistance, and I couldn't accept it [*Flaring up*] I will accept nothing that hasn't come to me direct from my father—nothing [*Softening*] But I am none the less grateful to you, dear Mr Elkin—[*looking round*] to everybody—for this kindness

Stephen [*with a sigh*] So be it, so be it, if it must be so

Ponting We don't wish to force assistance upon Miss Thornhill

Stephen On the contrary, we respect her independence of character

[*ELKIN shrugs his shoulders at VAL-LANCE, who is now seated upon the settee on the right*]

James [*stroking his beard*] Art—art You've been studying painting, haven't you?

Helen At Julian's, in the Rue de Bern, for three years—for pleasure, I imagined

James [*glancing furtively at ANN*] D'ye do oil portraits—family groups and so on?

Helen I'm not very successful as a colorist Black and white is what I am best at



*James* [*dubiously*] Black and white—

*Stephen* Is there much demand for that form of art in Paris?

*Helen* Paris? Oh, I shall come to London

*James* London, eh?

*Helen* My drawing isn't quite good enough for over there. It's only good enough for England. I shall sell my jewelry and furniture—I'm sharing a flat in the Avenue de Messine with an American girl—and that will carry me along excellently till I'm fairly started. Oh, I shall do very well.

*Rose* I live in London. My house will be somewhere for you to drop into, whenever you feel inclined.

*Helen* Thank you.

*Ponting* [*pulling at his moustache*] Often as you like—often as you like—

*Rose* [*loftily*] As I am in "society," as they call it, that will be nice for you.

*James* [*to ANN*] Now, then, mother, don't you be behind-hand—

*Ann* I'm sure I shall be very pleased if Miss Thornton—

*A Murmur* Thornhill—

*Ann* If she'll pay us a visit. We're homely people, but she and Cissy could play tennis all day long.

*Louisa* If she does come to Singlehampton, she mustn't go away without staying a day or two in the Crescent. [*To HELEN*] Do you play chess, dear?

[*HELEN shakes her head*]

My husband will teach you—won't you, Stephen?

*Stephen* Honored

*Thaddeus* [*having risen and come forward*] I'm sorry my wife isn't here. We should be grieved if Miss Thornhill left us out in the cold.

*Helen* [*looking at him with interest*] You are father's musical brother, aren't you?

*Thaddeus* Yes—Tad

*Helen* [*with a faint smile*] I promise not to leave you out in the cold. [*To everybody*] I can only repeat, I am most grateful. [*To ELKIN, about to rise*] Mrs. Elkin is waiting for me, to take me to the dress-maker—

*Elkin* [*detaining her*] One moment—one moment. [*To the others*] Gentlemen, Mr. Vallance and I have had our little talk, and we agree that the proper course to pursue in the matter of the late Mr. Mortimore's estate is to proceed at once to insert an advertisement in the public journals.

*James* An advertisement?

*Elkin* With the object of obtaining information respecting any will which he may have made at any time.

*James* [*after a pause*] Oh—very good.

*Stephen* [*coldly*] Does Mr. Vallance really advise that this is the proper course?

[*VALLANCE rises, and THADDEUS again retires*]

*Vallance* [*assentingly*] In the peculiar circumstances of the case.

*Elkin* We propose also to go a step further. We propose to circularize.

*James* Circularize?

*Ponting* [*disturbed*] What the devil's that?

*Elkin* We propose to address a circular to every solicitor in the law-list asking for such information.

*Helen* [*to ELKIN*] Is this necessary?

*Elkin* Mr. Vallance will tell us—

*Vallance* It comes under the head of taking all reasonable measures to find a will.

*Helen* [*looking round*] I—I sincerely hope that no one will think that it is on my behalf that Mr. Elkin—

*Elkin* [*checking her*] My dear, these are formal, and amicable, proceedings, to which everybody, we suggest, should be a party.

*Vallance* Everybody.

*Elkin* [*invitingly*] Everybody.

*James* [*breaking a chilly silence*] All right. Go ahead, Mr. Elkin. [*To STEPHEN*] We're willing?

*Stephen* Why not, why not? Rose ?

*Rose* [*hastily*] Oh, certainly.

*Vallance* [*to JAMES*] I have your authority, Mr. Mortimore, for acting with Mr. Elkin in this matter?

*James* You have, sir.

*Elkin* [*to VALLANCE, rising*] Will you come round to my office with me?

[*HELEN rises with ELKIN, whereupon the other men get to their feet. ANN and LOUISA also rise as HELEN comes to them and offers her hand*]

*Ann* [*shaking hands*] We're at the Grand Hotel.

*Louisa* [*shaking hands*] So am I and my husband.

*Helen* I'll call, if I may. [*She shakes hands with STEPHEN and JAMES and goes to ROSE*]

*Rose* [*rising to shake hands with her*] We're at the Grand, too. Colonel Ponting and I would be delighted.

*Ponting* Delighted

[*HELEN merely bows to PONTING, then she shakes hands with THADDEUS and passes out into the hall*]

*Elkin* [*having opened the door for HELEN—to everybody, genially*] Good-day, good-day

*James and Stephen* Good-day, Mr *Elkin*  
Good-day [*ELKIN follows HELEN*]

*Vallance* [*at the door—to JAMES and STEPHEN*] Where can I see you later?

*James* The Grand Food at half-past one

*Vallance* Thank you very much [*He bows to the ladies and withdraws, closing the door after him*]

*Ponting* [*pacing the room indignantly*] I wouldn't give the fellow so much as a dry biscuit!

[*There is a general break up, ANN and LOUISA joining ROSE on the right*]

*James* [*pacificaly*] Oh, there's no occasion to upset yourself, Colonel

*Ponting* [*on the left*] I wouldn't! I wouldn't! He's against us on every point

*James* Let 'em advertise, if it amuses 'em [*In an outburst*] Let 'em advertise and circularize till they're blue in the face

*Rose* [*with a shrill laugh*] Jim! Ha! ha! ha!

*Ann and Louisa* [*solemnly*] Hus—s—sh!

*James* [*dropping to a whisper*] Oh, I—I forgot

*Stephen* Yes, yes, yes, it's nothing more than a lawyer's trick, to swell their bill of costs

*James* Of course it isn't, of course it isn't [*Passing his hand under his beard*] I want some air, mother Get out o' this

*Ann* [*fastening her mantle*] You've an appointment at the tailor's, remember

*Stephen* [*looking at his watch*] So have I

*James* Are you coming, Colonel? [*Finding himself in the centre of a group—with a change of manner*] I say what a beautiful girl, this girl of Ned's!

*Stephen* Exceedingly

*Ponting* [*producing his cigarette-case*] Charming young woman

*Ann and Louisa* Lovely A lovely girl

*Rose* Quite presentable

*James* And she doesn't ask a shilling of us—not a bob

*Stephen* She impressed me enormously

*Ponting* [*with an unlighted cigarette in his mouth*] Charming, charming

*James* Ned ought to have left her a bit,

he ought to have left her a bit [*Resolutely*] Mother—we'll have her down home

*Stephen* We must tell some fib or other as to who she is Yes, we'll show her a little hospitality

*Ponting* And Rose—in London That'll make it up to her

*Rose* Yes, that'll make it up to her

[*The ladies move into the hall, the men follow JAMES is standing in the doorway and speaks to THADDEUS, who is now seated at the writing-table*]

*James* Tad, I'll stand you and your wife a good lunch One-thirty

[*THADDEUS nods acceptance, and JAMES goes after the others THADDEUS rises, and, looking through the blind of the middle window, watches them depart Presently PHYLLIS appears, putting on her gloves*]

*Phyllis* [*at the door, drawing a breath of relief*] They've gone

*Thaddeus* [*turning*] Is that you, Phyl?

*Phyllis* [*coming further into the room*] I've been waiting on the landing

*Thaddeus* Why didn't you come back, dear? You've missed Miss Thornhill

*Phyllis* [*walking away to the left, working at the fingers of a glove*] Yes, I—I know

*Thaddeus* The very person we were all here to meet

*Phyllis* I—I came over nervous [*Eagerly*] What is she like?

*Thaddeus* Such an aristocratic-looking girl

*Phyllis* Is she—is she?

*Thaddeus* I'll tell you all about her by and by [*Pushing the door to and coming to PHYLLIS, anxiously*] What do you think they're going to do now, Phyl?

*Phyllis* Who?

*Thaddeus* The lawyers They're going to advertise

*Phyllis* Advertise?

*Thaddeus* In the papers—to try to discover a will

*Phyllis* I—I suppose that's a mere matter of form?

*Thaddeus* Elkin and Vallance say so According to Stephen, it's simply a lawyer's dodge to run up costs [*Brightening*] Anyhow, we mustn't complain, where a big estate is involved

*Phyllis* Is it—such a—big estate?

*Thaddeus* Guess

*Phyllis* I can't

*James* [dubiously] Black and white—

*Stephen* Is there much demand for that form of art in Paris?

*Helen* Paris? Oh, I shall come to London

*James* London, eh?

*Helen* My drawing isn't quite good enough for over there. It's only good enough for England. I shall sell my jewelry and furniture—I'm sharing a flat in the Avenue de Messine with an American girl—and that will carry me along excellently till I'm fairly started. Oh, I shall do very well.

*Rose* I live in London. My house will be somewhere for you to drop into, whenever you feel inclined.

*Helen* Thank you.

*Ponting* [pulling at his moustache] Often as you like—often as you like—

*Rose* [loftily] As I am in "society," as they call it, that will be nice for you.

*James* [to ANN] Now, then, mother, don't you be behind-hand—

*Ann* I'm sure I shall be very pleased if Miss Thornton—

*A Murmur* Thornhill—

*Ann* If she'll pay us a visit. We're homely people, but she and Cissy could play tennis all day long.

*Louisa* If she does come to Singlehampton, she mustn't go away without staying a day or two in the Crescent. [To HELEN] Do you play chess, dear?

[HELEN shakes her head]

My husband will teach you—won't you, Stephen?

*Stephen* Honored

*Thaddeus* [having risen and come forward] I'm sorry my wife isn't here. We should be grieved if Miss Thornhill left us out in the cold.

*Helen* [looking at him with interest] You are father's musical brother, aren't you?

*Thaddeus* Yes—Tad

*Helen* [with a faint smile] I promise not to leave you out in the cold. [To everybody] I can only repeat, I am most grateful. [To ELKIN, about to rise] Mrs. Elkin is waiting for me, to take me to the dress-maker—

*Elkin* [detaining her] One moment—one moment. [To the others] Gentlemen, Mr. Vallance and I have had our little talk, and we agree that the proper course to pursue in the matter of the late Mr. Mortimore's estate is to proceed at once to insert an advertisement in the public journals.

*James* An advertisement?

*Elkin* With the object of obtaining information respecting any will which he may have made at any time.

*James* [after a pause] Oh—very good.

*Stephen* [coldly] Does Mr. Vallance really advise that this is the proper course?

[VALLANCE rises, and THADDEUS again retires]

*Vallance* [assentingly] In the peculiar circumstances of the case.

*Elkin* We propose also to go a step further. We propose to circularize.

*James* Circularize?

*Ponting* [disturbed]. What the devil's that?

*Elkin* We propose to address a circular to every solicitor in the law-list asking for such information.

*Helen* [to ELKIN] Is this necessary?

*Elkin* Mr. Vallance will tell us—

*Vallance* It comes under the head of taking all reasonable measures to find a will.

*Helen* [looking round] I—I sincerely hope that no one will think that it is on my behalf that Mr. Elkin—

*Elkin* [checking her] My dear, these are formal, and amicable, proceedings, to which everybody, we suggest, should be a party.

*Vallance* Everybody.

*Elkin* [invitingly] Everybody.

*James* [breaking a chilly silence] All right. Go ahead, Mr. Elkin. [To STEPHEN] We're willing?

*Stephen* Why not, why not? Rose ?

*Rose* [hastily] Oh, certainly.

*Vallance* [to JAMES] I have your authority, Mr. Mortimore, for acting with Mr. Elkin in this matter?

*James* You have, sir.

*Elkin* [to VALLANCE, rising] Will you come round to my office with me?

[HELEN rises with ELKIN, whereupon the other men get to their feet. ANN and LOUISA also rise as HELEN comes to them and offers her hand.]

*Ann* [shaking hands] We're at the Grand Hotel.

*Louisa* [shaking hands] So am I and my husband.

*Helen* I'll call, if I may. [She shakes hands with STEPHEN and JAMES and goes to ROSE.]

*Rose* [rising to shake hands with her] We're at the Grand, too. Colonel Ponting and I would be delighted . .

Ponting Delighted

[HELEN merely bows to PONTING, then she shakes hands with THADDEUS and passes out into the hall]

Elkin [having opened the door for HELEN—to everybody, genially] Good-day, good-day

James and Stephen Good-day, Mr Elkin Good-day [ELKIN follows HELEN]

Vallance [at the door—to JAMES and STEPHEN] Where can I see you later?

James The Grand Food at half-past one

Vallance Thank you very much [He bows to the ladies and withdraws, closing the door after him]

Ponting [pacing the room indignantly] I wouldn't give the fellow so much as a dry biscuit!

[There is a general break up, ANN and LOUISA joining ROSE on the right]

James [pacifically] Oh, there's no occasion to upset yourself, Colonel

Ponting [on the left] I wouldn't! I wouldn't! He's against us on every point

James Let 'em advertise, if it amuses 'em [In an outburst] Let 'em advertise and circularize till they're blue in the face

Rose [with a shrill laugh] Jim! Ha! ha! ha!

Ann and Louisa [solemnly] Hus—s—sh!

James [dropping to a whisper] Oh, I—I forgot

Stephen Yes, yes, yes, it's nothing more than a lawyer's trick, to swell their bill of costs

James Of course it isn't, of course it isn't [Passing his hand under his beard]

I want some air, mother Get out o' this

Ann [fastening her mantle] You've an appointment at the tailor's, remember

Stephen [looking at his watch] So have I

James Are you coming, Colonel? [Finding himself in the centre of a group—with a change of manner] I say what a beautiful girl, this girl of Ned's!

Stephen Exceedingly

Ponting [producing his cigarette-case] Charming young woman

Ann and Louisa Lovely A lovely girl

Rose Quite presentable

James And she doesn't ask a shilling of us—not a bob

Stephen She impressed me enormously

Ponting [with an unlighted cigarette in his mouth] Charming, charming

James Ned ought to have left her a bit,

he ought to have left her a bit [Resolutely] Mother—we'll have her down home

Stephen We must tell some fib or other as to who she is Yes, we'll show her a little hospitality

Ponting And Rose—in London That'll make it up to her

Rose Yes, that'll make it up to her

[The ladies move into the hall, the men follow JAMES is standing in the doorway and speaks to THADDEUS, who is now seated at the writing-table]

James Tad, I'll stand you and your wife a good lunch One-thirty

[THADDEUS nods acceptance, and JAMES goes after the others THADDEUS rises, and, looking through the blind of the middle window, watches them depart Presently PHYLLIS appears, putting on her gloves]

Phyllis [at the door, drawing a breath of relief] They've gone

Thaddeus [turning] Is that you, Phyl?

Phyllis [coming further into the room] I've been waiting on the landing

Thaddeus Why didn't you come back, dear? You've missed Miss Thornhill

Phyllis [walking away to the left, working at the fingers of a glove] Yes, I—I know

Thaddeus The very person we were all here to meet

Phyllis I—I came over nervous [Eagerly] What is she like?

Thaddeus Such an aristocratic-looking girl

Phyllis Is she—is she?

Thaddeus I'll tell you all about her by and by [Pushing the door to and coming to PHYLLIS, anxiously] What do you think they're going to do now, Phyl?

Phyllis Who?

Thaddeus The lawyers They're going to advertise

Phyllis Advertise?

Thaddeus In the papers—to try to discover a will

Phyllis I—I suppose that's a mere matter of form?

Thaddeus Elkin and Vallance say so According to Stephen, it's simply a lawyer's dodge to run up costs [Brightening] Anyhow, we mustn't complain, where a big estate is involved

Phyllis Is it—such a—big estate?

Thaddeus Guess

Phyllis I can't

*Thaddeus [coming closer to her]* I heard Elkin's managing-clerk tell Jim and the Colonel this morning that poor Ned may have died worth anything between a hundred and fifty and two hundred thousand pounds

*Phyllis [faintly]* Two hundred thousand  
!

*Thaddeus* Yes

*Phyllis* Oh, Tad—! [*She sits, on the settee on the left, leaning her head upon her hands*]

*Thaddeus* Splitting the difference, and allowing for death duties, our share would be close upon forty thousand To be on the safe side, put it at thirty-nine thousand Thirty-nine thousand pounds! [*Moving about the room excitedly*] I've been reckoning Invest that at four per cent—one is justified in calculating upon a four per cent basis—invest thirty-nine thousand at four per cent, and there you have an income of over fifteen hundred a year Fifteen hundred a year! [*Returning to her*] When we die, seven hundred and fifty a year for Joyce, seven hundred and fifty for Cyril!

[*She rises quickly and clings to him, burying her head upon his shoulder and clutching at the lapel of his coat*]  
Poor old lady! [*Putting his arms round her*] Poor old lady! You've gone through such a lot, haven't you?

*Phyllis [sobbing]* We both have

*Thaddeus* Sixteen years of it

*Phyllis* Sixteen years

*Thaddeus* Of struggle—struggle and failure

*Phyllis* Failure brought upon you by your wife—by me

*Thaddeus* Nonsense—nonsense—

*Phyllis* You always call it nonsense, you know it's true If you hadn't married me—if you'd married a girl of better family—you wouldn't have lost caste in the town—

*Thaddeus* Hush, hush! Don't cry, Phyl, don't cry, old lady

*Phyllis* You'd have had the choral societies, and the High School, and the organ at All Saints, you'd have been at the top of the tree long ago You know you would!

*Thaddeus [rallying her]* And if you hadn't married me, you might have captivated a gay young officer at Claybrook and got to London eventually Rose did it, and

you might have done it So that makes us quits Don't cry

*Phyllis [gradually regaining her composure]* There was a young fellow at the barracks who was after me

*Thaddeus [nodding]* You were prettier than Rose, a smarter girl altogether

*Phyllis [drying her eyes]* I'll be smart again now, dear I'm only thirty-five What's thirty-five!

*Thaddeus* The children won't swallow up everything now, will they?

*Phyllis* No, but Joyce shall look sweeter and daintier than ever, though

*Thaddeus* Cyril shall have a first-class, public-school education, that I'm determined upon There's Rugby—Rugby's the nearest—or Malvern—

*Phyllis [with a catch in her breath]* Oh, but—Tad—we'll leave Singlehampton, won't we?

*Thaddeus* Permanently?

*Phyllis* Yes—yes!

*Thaddeus* Won't that be rather a mistake?

*Phyllis* A mistake?

*Thaddeus* Just as we're able to hold up our heads in the town

*Phyllis* We should never be able to hold up our heads in Singlehampton If we were clothed in gold, we should still be lepers underneath, the curse would still rest on us

*Thaddeus [bewildered]*. But where—where shall we—?

*Phyllis* I don't care—anywhere [*Passionately*] Anywhere where I'm not sneered at for bringing up my children decently, and for making my home more tasteful than my neighbors', anywhere where it isn't known that I'm the daughter of a small shopkeeper—the daughter of "old Burdock of West Street"! [*Imploringly*] Oh, Tad

!  
*Thaddeus* You're right Nothing is ever forgiven you in the place you're born in We'll clear out

*Phyllis [slipping her arm through his]* When—when will you get me away?

*Thaddeus* Directly, directly, as soon as the lawyers [*He pauses, looking at her blankly*]

*Phyllis [frightened]* What's the matter?

*Thaddeus* We—we're talking as if—as if Ned's money is already ours!

*Phyllis [withdrawing her arm—steadily]* It will be  
c

*Thaddeus* Will it, do you think?  
*Phyllis* [with an expressionless face] I prophesy—it will be

[*HEATH* enters and, seeing *THADDEUS* and *PHYLLIS*, draws back]

*Heath* I'm sorry, sir I thought the room was empty

*Thaddeus* We're going [As he and *PHYLLIS* pass out into the hall] Don't come to the door

*Heath* Thank you, sir

[*HEATH* quietly and methodically replaces the chair at the window on the right Then, after a last look round, he switches off the lights and leaves the room again in gloom]

## ACT TWO

*It is a month later*

The drawing-room of a modern, cheaply-built villa, the residence of the *THADDEUS MORTIMORES*, in the town of Singlehampton. In the wall at the back are two windows. One is a bay-window provided with a window-seat, the other, the window on the right, opens to the ground into a small garden. At the bottom of the garden a paling runs from left to right, and in the paling there is a gate which gives access to a narrow lane. Beyond are the gardens and backs of other houses.

The fireplace is on the right of the room, the door on the left. A grand pianoforte, with its head towards the windows, and a music-stool occupy the middle of the room. On the right of the music-stool there is an armchair, and against the piano, facing the fireplace, there is a settee. Another settee is at the further end of the fireplace, and on the nearer side, opposite this settee, is an armchair. Also on the right hand there is a round table. An ottoman, opposing the settee by the piano, stands close to the table.

At the end of the piano there is a small table with an armchair on its right and left, and on the extreme left of the room stands another armchair with a still smaller table beside it. On the left of the bay-window there is a writing-table, and in front of the writing-table, but turned to the window, a chair. Other articles of furniture fill spaces against the walls.

There is a mirror over the fireplace and a clock on the mantel-shelf, and lying upon

the round table are a hat and a pair of gloves belonging to *HELEN*. Some flowers in pots hide the empty grate.

The room and everything in the room are eloquent of narrow means, if not of actual poverty. But the way in which the cheap furniture is dressed up, and the manner of its arrangement about the room, give evidence of taste and refinement.

The garden is full of the bright sunshine of a fine July afternoon.

*HELEN*, engaged in making a sketch of *JOYCE* and *CYRIL*, who are facing her, is sitting in the chair on the right of the table at the end of the piano. A drawing-block is on her knees and a box of crayons is on the table at her elbow. *JOYCE* is a slim, serious girl of fifteen, *CYRIL*, a handsome boy of fourteen.

*HELEN* and the *THADDEUS MORTIMORES* are dressed in mourning, but not oppressively so.

*THADDEUS* is at the piano, accompanying a sentimental ballad which *TRIST*, standing beside him, is singing. *TRIST* is a big, healthy-looking, curly-headed young fellow in somewhat shabby clerical clothes. *PHYLLIS*, looking more haggard than when last seen, is on the settee by the fireplace. Her hands lie idly upon some needlework in her lap, and she is in deep thought.

*Thaddeus* [starting afresh with the symphony] Once more

*Helen* [to the children, softly] Do you want a rest?

*Cyril* [standing close to his sister] No, thanks

*Joyce* [in the chair at the extreme left]

Oh, no, don't give us a rest

[As the symphony ends, the door opens a little way, and *JAMES* pops his head in]

*James* Hallo!

*Thaddeus* Hallo, Jim!

[*JAMES* enters, followed by *STEPHEN*, both with an air of bustle and self-importance. They also are in mourning, are gloved, and are wearing their hats, which they remove on entering]

*Stephen* May we come in?

*James* Good-afternoon, Mr. Trist

*Stephen* How do you do, Mr. Trist?

*Trist* [to *JAMES* and *STEPHEN*] How are you, how are you?

*James* [to the children, kissing *JOYCE*].

Well, kids! [*Shaking hands with HELEN*]  
Well, my dear!

[*PHYLLIS rises JAMES crosses to her*]  
Don't get up, Phyllis What's this? You're not very bobbish, I hear

Phyllis [*nervously*] It's nothing

Thaddeus [*tidying his music*] She's sleeping badly just now, poor old lady

Stephen [*having greeted HELEN and the children—to PHYLLIS*] Oh, Phyllis, Louisa has discovered a wonderful cure for sleeplessness at the herbalist's in Crown Street A few dried leaves merely You strew them under the bed and the effect is magical

James Glass of warm milk's my remedy—

Stephen Eighteen-pence an ounce, it costs

James Not that sleeplessness bothers me

Phyllis [*sitting on the ottoman and resuming her work—to STEPHEN*] Thank you for telling me about it

James [*to HELEN*] Making quite a long stay here

Helen [*smiling*] Am I not?

Stephen You and Phyllis, Tad, are more honored than we were in the Crescent

James Or we were at "Ivanhoe" She was only a couple o' nights with us

Stephen Less with us She arrived one morning and left the next

James [*to HELEN*] Been in Nelson Villas over a week, haven't you?

Helen [*touching her drawing*] Is it more than a week?

James [*looking at HELEN's drawing*] Taking the youngsters' portraits, too

Stephen [*also looking at the drawing*] H'm! I suppose children are difficult subjects

Trist [*moving towards the door—to HELEN*] Miss Thornhill, don't forget your engagement

Helen [*to JOYCE and CYRIL*] Mr Trist is going to treat us to the flower-show by and by

Cyril Good man!

Joyce Oh, Mr Trist!

Stephen [*to TRIST*] Not driving you away, I hope?

Trist [*at the door*] No, no, I've some work to do

[*He withdraws STEPHEN puts his hat on the top of the piano*]

James [*after watching the door close*] Decent sort o' young man, that, nothing of the lodger about him

Stephen I've always said so [*To THADDEUS, lowering his voice*] Mr Trist knows how—er—h'm—poor Edward left his affairs?

Thaddeus Everybody does, it's all over the town

Stephen [*resignedly*] Yes, impossible to keep it to ourselves

James Thanks to their precious advertisement [*To JOYCE and CYRIL loudly*] Now, then, children, be off with you! I want to talk to your father and mother

Joyce [*to HELEN*] Will you excuse us?

Cyril Awfully sorry, Helen

[*The children pass through the open window into the garden and disappear*]

HELEN rises and, having laid her drawing-block aside, is following them]

James [*to HELEN*] Not you, my dear. You're welcome to hear our business

Helen Oh, no, you mustn't let me intrude

Stephen I think Helen ought to hear it  
[*HELEN pauses, standing by the table on the right*]

I think she ought to be made aware of what's going on

James Tad—

Thaddeus [*coming forward*] Eh?

James The meeting's to take place this afternoon

[*PHYLLIS looks up from her work suddenly, with parted lips*]

Thaddeus This afternoon?

Stephen At four o'clock

Thaddeus [*glancing at the clock on the mantelpiece*] It's past three now

James [*placing his hat on the table at the end of the piano and sitting at the left of the table*] It's been fixed up at last rather in a hurry

Stephen [*sitting in the chair on the extreme left*] We didn't get Elkin's letter, telling us he was coming through, till this morning

Thaddeus You might have notified us earlier, though, one of you Just like you fellows!

Stephen [*waving his arms*] On the day I go to press I've quite enough to remember

James [*to THADDEUS, roughly*] It's your holiday-time, what have you got to do? An hour's notice is as good as a week's

Stephen [*to HELEN*] This is a meeting of the family, Helen, to be held at my brother's house, for the purpose of—er—



*Helen* [advancing a little] Winding matters up?

*James* For the purpose of receiving Elkin and Vallance's report

*Helen* [keenly] And to—?

*James* And to decide upon the administration of the estate on behalf of the next-of-kin

*Helen* In my words—wind matters up [With an appearance of cheerfulness] Which means an end to a month's suspense, doesn't it?

*Thaddeus* [apologetically] A not very satisfactory end to yours

*Helen* To mine? [With an effort] Oh, I—I've suffered no suspense, Mr Tad Mr Elkin has kept me informed of the result of the advertising and the circularizing from the beginning

*Thaddeus* But there has been no result

*Helen* No result is the result

*Stephen* Exactly

[During the following talk, HELEN moves away and seats herself in the chair by the head of the piano PHYLLIS has resumed her work again, bending over it so that her face is almost hidden]

*Thaddeus* [to JAMES and STEPHEN] Will Rose and the Colonel be down?

*James* We're on our way to the station to meet 'em

*Stephen* [bitterly] Ha! Will they be down?

*Thaddeus* You didn't overlook them, evidently

*James* [with a growl] No, the gallant Colonel doesn't give us much chance of overlooking him

*Stephen* Colonel Ponting might be the only person interested, judging by the tone he adopts

*James* A nice life he's been leading us lately

*Stephen* Elkin and Vallance are sick of him

*James* Hasn't two penny pieces to clink together, that's the size of it

*Stephen* A man may be hard up and yet behave with dignity

*James* I expect the decorators are asking for a bit on the nail

*Thaddeus* [sitting on the right of the table at the end of the piano] Decorators?

*Stephen* [to THADDEUS] Haven't you heard?

*Thaddeus* No

*Stephen* The magnificent house they've taken in Carlos Place—?

*James* Close to Berkeley Square

*Stephen* [correcting JAMES' pronunciation] Barkeley Square

*James* Stables and motor-garridge at the back

*Stephen* Oh, yes, they're decorating and furnishing most elaborately Lou had a note from Rose a day or two since

*James* He'll strip my sister of every penny she's come into, if she doesn't look out

*Stephen* The gross indelicacy of the thing is what offends me We have been content to remain passive

*James* And I fancy our plans and projects are as important as the Colonel's

*Stephen* I should assume so

*James* [to STEPHEN, with a jerk of the thumb towards THADDEUS] Shall I ?

*Stephen* No harm in it now

*James* [to THADDEUS, leaning forward—impressively] Tad . .

*Thaddeus* What?

*James* That land at the bottom of Gordon Street, where the allotment grounds are—

*Thaddeus* Yes?

*James* It's mine

*Thaddeus* Yours, Jim?

*James* It belongs to me I've signed the contract and paid a deposit

*Thaddeus* What do you intend to do with it?

*James* What should I intend to do with it—eat it? I intend to build there—build the finest avenue of houses in Singlehampton [Rising and going to the piano, where he traces a plan on the lid with his finger] Look here!

[THADDEUS joins him and watches the tracing of the plan]

Here's Gordon Street Here's the pub at the corner I come along here—straight along here—to Albert Terrace Opposite Albert Terrace I take in Clark's piano factory, and where Clark's factory stands I lay out an ornamental garden with a fountain in the middle of it On I go at a curve, to avoid the playground of Fothergill's school, till I reach Bolton's store He stops me, but I'll squeeze him out some day, as sure as my name's James Henry! [To THADDEUS] D'ye see?



*Thaddeus* [*uncomfortably, eyeing HELEN*] Splendid, splendid

*James* [*moving round the head of the piano to the right*] Poor old Ned! Ha! my brother won't have done so badly by his native town after all

*Thaddeus* [*under his breath, trying to remind JAMES of HELEN'S presence*] Jim—Jim

*James* [*obliviously, coming upon HELEN*] D'ye know the spot we're talking about, my dear?

*Helen* No

*James* You must get 'em to walk you down there [*To PHYLLIS*] You trot her down there, Phyllis

*Phyllis* [*without raising her eyes from her work*] I will.

*Stephen* [*to JAMES*]. You haven't told them *everything*, Jim

*James* [*sitting upon the settee by the piano*] Oh, your offices . . .

*Stephen* [*to everybody*]. It isn't of the greatest importance, perhaps, but it's part of James's scheme to erect an exceptionably noble building in the new road to provide adequate printing and publishing offices for the *Times and Mirror*

*Thaddeus* What, you're not deserting King Street, Stephen?

*Stephen* [*rising and walking to the fireplace*] Yes, I've had enough of those cramped, poky premises

*Thaddeus* They are inconvenient

*Stephen* [*on the hearthrug, facing the others*] And, to be perfectly frank, I've had enough of Mr Hammond and the *Courier*

*Thaddeus* I don't blame you there The *Courier* is atrociously personal occasionally

*Stephen* [*pompously*] I don't say it because Hammond is, in a manner, my rival—I'm not so small-minded as that—but I do say that he is a vulgar man and that the *Courier* is a vulgar and mischievous journal

*James* He's up to date, though, is Mister Freddy Hammond

*Stephen* His plant is slightly more modern than mine, I admit

*James* [*chuckling*] Aye, you'll be able to present those antediluvian printing-presses of yours to the museum as curiosities

*Stephen* [*with a wave of the hand*] Anyhow, the construction of Jim's new road marks a new era in the life of the *Times and Mirror* [*Leaving the fireplace*] I'm

putting no less than twelve thousand pounds into the dear old paper, Tad

*Thaddeus* [*standing by the table on the left*] Twelve thousand

*Stephen* How will that agree with Mr Hammond's digestion, eh? Twelve thousand pounds! [*Coming to THADDEUS*] And what are *your* plans for the future, if one may ask? You'll leave these wretched villas, of course?

*Thaddeus* [*evasively*] Oh, I—I'm waiting till this law business is absolutely settled

*Stephen* [*hastily*] Quite right, quite right So am I, so am I, actually But we may talk, I suppose, among ourselves—

*James* [*looking at his watch and rising*] By George! We shall miss Rose and the Colonel

*Stephen* [*fetching his hat*] Pish! the Colonel

*James* [*to HELEN*] Ta-ta, my dear

[*HELEN rises, and he shakes hands with her*]

See you at the meeting, Phyllis

*Stephen* [*to HELEN, across the piano*] Good-bye, Helen

*James* [*having picked up his hat, at the door*] Don't be late, Tad

*Stephen* [*at the door*] No, no, don't be late

*Thaddeus* Four o'clock

*Stephen* Sharp

[*THADDEUS follows JAMES and STEPHEN into the hall and returns immediately*]

*Thaddeus* [*closing the door*] My dear Helen, I apologize to you most humbly

*Helen* [*coming forward*] For what?

*Thaddeus* For Jim's bad taste, and Stephen's, in talking before you as they've been doing

*Helen* Oh, it's of no consequence

*Thaddeus* I could have kicked Jim

*Helen* [*impulsively*] Mr Tad—[*giving him her hand*] I congratulate you [*Going to PHYLLIS and kissing her lightly upon the cheek*] I congratulate you both heartily No two people in the world deserve good fortune more than you do

*Thaddeus* It's extremely kind and gracious of you to take it in this way

*Helen* Why, in what other way could I take it?

*Thaddeus* At your age, you mayn't esteem money very highly But—there are other considerations

*Helen* [turning away and seating herself upon the settee by the piano] Yes, we won't speak of those

*Thaddeus* [walking to the bay-window] And there was just a chance that the inquiries might have brought a will to light—a will benefiting you. Though you were anxious not to appear unfriendly to the family, you must have realized that

*Helen* Whether I did or not, it's all done with now finally—finally [Blowing the subject from her] Phew!

*Thaddeus* [his elbows on the piano, speaking across it to HELEN] Phyl and I are not altogether selfish and grasping. She has been worrying herself to death these last few days—haven't you, Phyl?—ever since we heard the meeting was near at hand

*Phyllis* [in a low voice] Yes

*Thaddeus* Ever since you came to us, in fact

*Helen* [jumping up] Ah, what a nuisance I've been to you! [Sitting beside PHYLLIS] How relieved you'll be to pack me off to-morrow!

*Thaddeus* To-morrow?

[Uttering a little sound, PHYLLIS stops working and stares straight before her]

*Helen* [slipping an arm round PHYLLIS's waist] That letter I had while we were at lunch—it was from a girl who used to sit next to me at Julian's. She's found me some capital rooms, she says, close to Regent's Park, and I'm going up to look at them.

[THADDEUS comes to her]

In any event, the sooner I get out of Singlehampton the better

*Thaddeus* Why?

*Helen* Everybody, in the town eyes me so queerly, I'm certain they suspect

*Thaddeus* It's your imagination

*Helen* It isn't [Hesitatingly] I—I've confided in Mr Trist

*Thaddeus* [surprised] Confided in Trist?

*Helen* [nodding] I hated the idea of his thinking me—deceitful

*Thaddeus* [sitting on the settee by the piano] Trist would never have guessed

*Helen* Oh, Mr Tad, who, in heaven's name, that wasn't born yesterday could believe the story of my being simply a protégée of father's, the daughter of an old business friend of his? Your brother Stephen may be an excellent editor, but his powers of invention are beneath contempt

*Thaddeus* [laughing] Ha, ha, ha! [Rub-

bing his knees] That's one for Stephen, that's a rap for Stephen

*Helen* And then, again, the other members of the family are becoming so horribly jealous

*Thaddeus* [seriously] Ah, yes

*Helen* You noticed your brother's remarks? And Mrs James and Mrs Stephen almost cut me in East Street this morning

*Thaddeus* [clenching his fists] Thank God, we shall have done with that sort of thing directly we shake the dust of Singlehampton from our feet!

*Helen* Directly you—!

*Thaddeus* [gaily] There! Now I've let the cat out of the bag. Phyllis will tell you. You tell her, Phyl! [Rising] I promised Rawlinson I'd help him index his madrigals this afternoon, I'll run round to him and explain [Pausing on his way to the door] Helen, you must be our first visitor in our new home, wherever we pitch our tent. Make that a bargain with her, Phyl! [At the door, to PHYLLIS] We'll start at ten minutes to, old lady. Be ready [He disappears, closing the door after him]

*Helen* [rising and walking away to the left] Well! I do think it shabby of you, Phyllis. You and Mr Tad might have trusted me with your secret. [Facing her] Phyllis, wouldn't it be glorious if you came to London to live—or near London? Wouldn't it?

*Phyllis* [in a strange, quiet voice, her hands lying quite still upon her lap] Helen—Helen dear

*Helen* Yes?

*Phyllis* That morning, a month ago, in Lunchpool—while we were all sitting in your poor father's library waiting for you

*Helen* [returning to her] On the Friday morning—

*Phyllis* There was a discussion as to making you an allowance, and—[her eyes avoiding HELEN'S] and everybody was most anxious—most anxious—that you should be placed upon a proper footing

*Helen* Mr Elkin broached the subject when I arrived. You were out of the room

*Phyllis* Yes. And you declined

*Helen* Certainly I gave them my reasons. Why do you bring this up?

[PHYLLIS rises, laying her work upon the table behind her]

*Phyllis* [drawing a deep breath] Helen—I want you to reconsider your decision

*Helen* Reconsider it?

*Phyllis* I want you to reconsider your determination not to accept an allowance from the family

*Helen* Impossible

*Phyllis* Oh, don't be so hasty Listen first This good fortune of ours—of Tad's and mine—that you've congratulated us upon—I shall never enjoy it—

*Helen* [*incredulously*] Oh, Phyllis!

*Phyllis* I shall not It will never bring me a moment's happiness unless you consent to receive an allowance from the family—sufficient to give you a sense of independence

*Helen* [*seating herself in the chair on the extreme left, with her back to PHYLLIS*]. I couldn't

*Phyllis* And to make your future perfectly safe

*Helen* I couldn't

*Phyllis* [*entreatingly*] Do—do—

*Helen* It's out of the question

*Phyllis* Please—for my sake!

*Helen* [*turning to her*] I'm sorry to distress you, Phyllis, indeed I'm sorry But when you see me gaining some little position in London, through my work, you'll cease to feel miserable about me

*Phyllis* Never—never—

*Helen* [*starting up and walking to the fireplace impetuously*] Oh, you don't understand me—my pride A pensioner of the Mortimore family! I! How can you suggest it? I refused their help before I was fully acquainted with these, to me, uncongenial relations of father's—I don't include Mr Tad in that expression, of course, and now I *am* acquainted with them, I would refuse it a thousand times If I were starving, I wouldn't put myself under the smallest obligation to the Mortimores

*Phyllis* [*unsteadily*] Obligation—to—the—Mortimores—obligation! [*As if about to make some communication to HELEN, supporting herself by leaning upon the table on the right, her body bent forward—almost maudibly*] Helen—Helen . .

*Helen* What ?

[*There is a short silence, and then PHYLLIS drops back upon the settee by the piano*]

*Phyllis* [*rocking herself to and fro*] Oh—oh, dear—oh—!

*Helen* [*coming to her and standing over her*] You're quite ill, Phyllis, your bad nights are taking it out of you dreadfully.

You ought to have the advice of a doctor  
*Phyllis* [*weakly*] No—don't send for the doctor—

*Helen* Go up to your room, then, and keep quiet till Mr Tad calls you [*Glancing at the clock*] You've a quarter of an hour—

*Phyllis* [*clutching HELEN's skirt*] Helen—you're fond of me and Tad—you said yesterday how attached you'd grown to us .

*Helen* [*soothingly*] I am—I am—very fond of you

*Phyllis* And the children . . . ?

*Helen* Yes, yes

*Phyllis* My poor children!

*Helen* Hush! Why poor children? Pull yourself together Go up to your room

*Phyllis* [*taking HELEN's hand and caressing it*] Helen—if you won't accept an allowance from the entire family, accept it from Tad and me

*Helen* No, no, no

*Phyllis* Four—three hundred a year.

*Helen* No

*Phyllis* Two hundred

*Helen* No

*Phyllis* We could spare it. We shouldn't miss it, We should never miss it

*Helen* Not a penny

*Phyllis* [*rising and gripping HELEN's shoulders*] You shall—you shall accept it, Helen

*Helen* Phyllis! [*releasing herself and drawing back*] Phyllis, you're very odd to-day You've got this allowance idea on the brain Look here, don't let's mention the subject again, or I—I shall be offended

*Phyllis* [*dully, hanging her head*] All right Very well

*Helen* Forgive me It happens to be just the one point I'm sensitive upon [*Listening, then going to the open window*] Here are the children Do go up-stairs [*Calling into the garden*] Hallo!

[*PHYLLIS leaves the room as CYRIL and JOYCE appear outside the window The boy is carrying a few freshly cut roses*]

Now, then, children! Isn't it time we routed Mr Trist out of his study?

*Cyril* [*entering and going towards the door*] I'll stir the old chap up [*Remembering the nosegay*] Oh . . ! [*Presenting it to HELEN*] Allow me

*Helen* For me? How sweet of you! [*Plac-*

ing the flowers against her belt and then at her breast] Where shall I wear them—here, or here?

Cyril Anywhere you like [*Awkwardly*] We sha'n't see anything nicer at the flower-show, I'm certain

Helen No, they're beautiful

Cyril [*his eyes on the carpet*] I don't mean the flowers.

Helen [*inclining her head*] Thank you

[CYRIL again makes for the door] Don't disturb mother [*Moving away to the fireplace, where, at the mirror, over the mantel-shelf, she fixes the roses in her belt*] She has to go to Claybrook Road with your father in a little while, and I want her to rest

Cyril [*pausing*] She is seedy, isn't she? [*Puckering his brows*] Going to Uncle Jim's, are they?

Helen Yes

Cyril That's to do with our money, I expect

Helen [*busy at the mirror*] With your money?

Cyril Father's come into a heap of money, you know

Joyce [*reproachfully*] Cyril!

Cyril [*not heeding her*] So have Uncle Jim and Uncle Stephen and Aunt Rose

Helen I'm delighted.

[JOYCE signs to CYRIL to desist]

Cyril [*to JOYCE*] Oh, what's the use of our keeping it dark any longer?

Joyce We promised mother—

Cyril Ages ago But you heard what father said to Uncle Stephen—it's all over the town Young Pither says there's something about it in the paper

Helen The paper?

Cyril The *Courier*—that fellow Hammond's paper Hammond was beastly sarcastic about it last week, Pither says [*Going to the door*] I don't read the *Courier* myself

[*At the door, he beckons to JOYCE She joins him, and his voice drops to a deep whisper*]

Besides—

[*He glances significantly at HELEN, whose back is turned to them*]

it'll make it easier for us [*Nudging JOYCE*] Now's your chance, do it now [*Aloud*] Give me five minutes, you two I can't be seen at the flower-show in these togs

[*He withdraws Having assured herself*]

that the door is closed, JOYCE advances to HELEN]

Joyce Helen .

Helen Hallo!

Joyce [*gravely*] Have you a minute to spare?

Helen [*coming to the round table*] Yes, dear

Joyce Helen, it's quite true we've come into a great deal of money Uncle Edward, who lived at Linchpool—oh, you knew him, didn't you?—he was a friend of yours—

Helen [*nodding*] He was a friend of mine

Joyce Uncle Edward has left his fortune to the family—[*breaking off*] you've been told already!

Helen Well—yes

Joyce We haven't received our share yet, but we *shall*, as soon as it's all divided up [*Timidly*] Helen

[HELEN seats herself upon the ottoman in an attitude of attention]

I needn't tell you this will very much improve father and mother's position.

Helen Naturally

Joyce And mine and Cyril's, too I'm to finish abroad, I believe

Helen Lucky brat

Joyce But it's Cyril I want to talk to you about—my brother Cyril . . .

Helen Cyril?

Joyce Cyril is to be entered for one of the principal public schools

Helen Is he?

Joyce One of those schools which stamp a boy a gentleman for the rest of his life

Helen He is a gentleman, as it is I've a high opinion of Cyril

Joyce Oh, I am glad to hear you say so, because—because

Helen Because what? [*JOYCE turns away in silence to the settee by the piano*] What are you driving at, Joicey?

Joyce [*lounging on the settee uneasily and inelegantly*] Of course, Cyril's only fourteen at present, there's no denying that

Helen I suppose there isn't

Joyce But in three years' time he'll be seventeen, and in another three he'll be twenty

Helen [*puzzled*] Well?

Joyce And at twenty you're a man, aren't you?

Helen A young man

Joyce [*seating herself, her elbows on her*]

*knees, examining her fingers]* And even then he'd be content to wait

*Helen* To wait? What for?

*Joyce [in a low voice]* Cyril wishes to marry you some day, Helen

*Helen [after a pause, gently]* Does he?

*Joyce* He consulted me about it soon after you came to us, and I advised him to be quite sure of himself before he spoke to you And he is, quite sure of himself

*Helen* And he's asked you to speak for him?

*Joyce* He prefers my doing it [*Looking, under her lashes, at HELEN*] Are you furious?

*Helen* Not a scrap

*Joyce [transferring herself from the settee to the floor at HELEN's feet—embracing her]* Oh, that's lovely of you! I was afraid you might be

*Helen* Furious?

*Joyce [gazing at her admiringly]* At our aiming so high I was afraid you might consider that marrying Cyril would be marrying beneath you

*Helen [tenderly]* The girl who marries Cyril will have to be a far grander person than I am, Joyce, to be marrying beneath her

*Joyce* Oh, Cyril's all right in himself, and so is father Father's very retiring, but he's as clever a musician as any in the midlands And mother is all right in herself [*Backing away from HELEN*] It's not mother's fault, it's her misfortune

*Helen* Her misfortune . ?

*Joyce [bitterly]* Oh, I'll be bound they mentioned it at "Ivanhoe" or at the Crescent

*Helen* Mentioned . ?

*Joyce [between her teeth]* The shop—grandfather's shop

*Helen* Ah, yes

*Joyce [clenching her hands]* Ah! [*Squatting upon her heels, her shoulders hunched*] Grandfather was a grocer, Helen—a grocer Oh, mother has suffered terribly through it—agonies

*Helen* Poor mother!

*Joyce* We've all suffered Sometimes it's been as much as Cyril and I could do to keep our heads up, [*proudly, with flashing eyes*] but we've done it The Singlehampton people are beasts

*Helen* Joyce!

*Joyce* If it's the last word I ever utter—

beasts [*Swallowing a tear*] And only half of it was grocery—only half

*Helen* Only half—?

*Joyce* It was a double shop There were two windows, the other half was bottles of wine They forget that, they forget that!

*Helen* A shame

*Joyce [embracing HELEN again]*. What shall I say to him, then?

*Helen* Say to him?

*Joyce* Cyril—what answer shall I give him?

*Helen* Oh, tell Cyril that I am highly complimented by his offer—

*Joyce [eagerly]* Complimented—yes ?

*Helen* And that, if he's of the same mind when he's a man, and I am still single, he may propose to me again

*Joyce [in alarm]*. If you're—still single ?

*Helen* Yes—[*shaking her head*] and if he's of the same mind

[*There is a sharp, prolonged rapping on the door JOYCE and HELEN rise*]

*Joyce [going to the door]* It's that frightful tease

[*She opens the door, and TRIST enters, carrying his hat, gloves, and walking-stick*]

*Trist* Ladies, I have reason to believe that several choice specimens of the *Dianthus Caryophyllus* refuse to raise their heads until you grace the flower-show with your presence

[*JOYCE slaps his hand playfully and disappears HELEN takes her hat from the round table and, standing before the mirror at the mantelpiece, pins it on her head TRIST watches her*]

*Helen [after a silence, her back to TRIST]* The glass reflects more than one face, Mr Trist

*Trist [moving]* I beg your pardon

*Helen* You were thinking . ?

*Trist* Philosophizing—observing your way of putting on your hat

*Helen* I put it on carelessly?

*Trist* Quickly A convincing sign of youth After you are five-and-twenty the process will take at least ten minutes

*Helen* And at thirty?

*Trist* Half an hour Add another half-hour for each succeeding decade—

*Helen [turning to him]* I'm afraid you're a knowing, worldly parson

Trist [laughing] No, no, a tolerant, human parson

Helen We shall see [Picking up her gloves] If ever you get a living in London, Mr Trist, I shall make a point of sitting under you

Trist I bind you to that

Helen [pulling on a glove] By-the-bye, I set out to seek my London living to-morrow

Trist [with a change of manner] To-morrow?

Helen To-morrow

Trist [blankly] I—I'm sorry

Helen Very polite of you I'm glad

Trist Glad?

Helen It sounds rather unkind, doesn't it? Oh, I'm extremely fond of everybody in this house—Mr and Mrs Tad and the children, I mean But I'm sure it isn't good, morally, for me to be here, even if there were no other reasons for my departure

Trist Morally?

Helen Yes, if I remained here, all that's bad in my nature would come out on top Do you know that I've the makings in me of a most accomplished liar and hypocrite?

Trist I shouldn't have suspected it

Helen I have [Coming nearer to him] What do you think takes place this afternoon?

Trist What?

Helen [with gradually increasing excitement] There's to be a meeting of the Mortimore family at James Mortimore's house at four o'clock He and his brother Stephen have just informed me, with the delicacy which is characteristic of them, that they are going to arrange with the lawyers to administer my father's estate without any more delay And I was double-faced enough to receive the news smilingly and agreeably, and all the time I could have struck them—I could have seen them drop dead in this room without a pang of regret—

Trist No, no—

Helen I could [Walking away and pacing the room on the left] Oh, it isn't father's money I covet I said so to the family in Linchpool, and I say it again But I deceived myself

Trist Deceived yourself?

Helen Deceived myself I can't bear that father should have forgotten me I can't bear it, I can't resign myself to it, I shall

never resign myself to it I thought I should be able to, but I was mistaken I told Mr Thaddeus that I've been suffering no suspense this last month It's a falsehood, I've been suffering intense suspense I've been watching the posts, for letters from Elkin, I've been praying, daily, hourly, that something—anything—might be found to prove that father had remembered me And I loathe these people, who step over me and stand between me and the being I loved best on earth, I loathe them I detest the whole posse of them, except the Thaddeuses, and I wish this money may bring them, and those belonging to them, every ill that's conceivable [Confronting Trist, her bosom heaving] Don't you lecture me

Trist [good-humoredly] I haven't the faintest intention of doing so

Helen Hal [At the piano, mimicking JAMES] Here's Gordon Street—

Trist Eh?

Helen You come along here, to Albert Terrace—taking in Clark's piano factory—

Trist Who does?

Helen [fiercely]. Here—here's the pub at the corner!

Trist [bewildered] I—I don't—

Helen [speaking to him across the piano] James Mortimore is buying land and building a new street in the town

Trist Really?

Helen And Stephen is putting twelve thousand pounds into his old-fashioned paper, to freshen it up, and the Pontings are moving into a big house in London—near Berkeley Square, as James calls it, and they must needs discuss their affairs in my hearing, brutes that they are! [Coming to the chair on the left of the table at the end of the piano] Oh, thank God, I'm leaving the town to-morrow! It was only a sort of curiosity that brought me here [Sitting and producing her handkerchief] Thank God, I'm leaving to-morrow!

[Trist walks to the window on the right to allow her to recover herself, and then returns to her]

Trist My dear child, may I speak quite plainly to you?

Helen [wiping her eyes] If you don't lecture me

Trist I won't lecture you I merely venture to suggest that you are a trifle illogical

Helen I dare say

Trist After all, recollect, our friends

James and Stephen are not to be blamed for the position they find themselves in

*Helen* Their manners are insufferable

*Trist* Hardly insufferable Nothing is insufferable

*Helen* There you go!

*Trist* Their faults of manner and breeding are precisely the faults a reasonable, dispassionate person would have no difficulty in excusing And I shall be much astonished, when the bitterness of your mortification has worn off—

*Helen* You are lecturing!

*Trist* I'm not, I give you my word I'm not

*Helen* It sounds uncommonly like it What did I tell you the other day—that you were different from the clergymen I'd met hitherto, because you were—?

*Trist* Jolly

*Helen* [with a shrug] Jolly! [Wearily] Oh, please go and hurry the children up, and let's be off to the flowers

*Trist* [not stirring] My dear Miss Thornhill—

*Helen* [impatiently] I'll fetch them—

*Trist* Don't [Deliberately] My dear Miss Thornhill, to show you how little I regard myself as worthy of the privilege of lecturing you, [smiling] to show you how the seeds of selfishness may germinate and flourish even in the breast of a cleric—may I make a confession to you?

*Helen* Confession—?

*Trist* I—I want to confess to you that the circumstance of your having been left as you are—cast adrift on the world, unprotected, without means apart from your own talent and exertions—is one that fills me with—hope

*Helen* Hope?

*Trist* Fills me with hope, though it may scarcely justify my presumption [Sitting opposite to her] You were assuming a minute ago, in joke perhaps, the possibility of my obtaining a living some day

*Helen* [graciously, but with growing uneasiness] Not altogether in joke

*Trist* Anyhow, there is a decided possibility of a living coming my way—and practically in London, as it chances

*Helen* I—I'm pleased

*Trist* Yes, in the natural order of events a living will be vacant within the next few years which is in the gift of the father of an old college chum of mine It's a suburban

parish—close to Twickenham—and I promised it

*Helen* That would be—nice for you

*Trist* [gazing at her fixedly] Jolly

*Helen* [her eyes drooping] Very—jolly

*Trist* I should still be a poor man—that I shall always be, but poverty is relative It would be riches compared with my curacy here [After a pause] The vicarage has a garden with some grand old trees

*Helen* Many of the old gardens—in the suburbs—are charming

*Trist* I—I could let the vicarage during the summer, to increase my income

*Helen* May a vicar—let—his vicarage?

*Trist* It's done Some Bishops object to it, [innocently] but you can dodge the old boy

*Helen* Dodge the—old boy!

*Trist* There are all sorts of legal fictions to help you I know of a Bishop's son-in-law who let his vicarage for a term under the pretence of letting only the furniture

*Helen* Wicked.

*Trist* [leaning forward] But I shouldn't dream of letting my vicarage if my income—proved sufficient

*Helen* It would be wealth—you say—in comparison—

*Trist* Yes, but I—I might—marry

*Helen* [hastily] Oh—oh, of course

[The door opens, and JOYCE and CYRIL enter, dressed for going out CYRIL is in his best suit, is gloved, and swings a cane which is too long for him At the same moment THADDEUS lets himself into the garden at the gate He is accompanied by DENYER, an ordinary-looking person with whiskers and moustache HELEN and TRIST rise, and she goes to the mirror in some confusion, and gives a last touch to her hat]

*Joyce* Have we kept you waiting?

*Cyril* Sorry Couldn't get my tie to go right

*Thaddeus* [in the garden] Come in, Denyer [At the window, to those in the room] What, haven't you folks gone yet?

*Trist* [with the children, following HELEN into the garden] Just off

*Thaddeus* [to HELEN, as she passes him] Hope you'll enjoy yourself

*Trist* [to DENYER] Ah, Mr Denyer, how are you?

*Denyer.* How are you, Mr Trist?



Joyce and Cyril [to THADDEUS] Good-bye, father

Thaddeus [kissing them] Good-bye, my dears

[TRIST opens the gate, and HELEN and the children pass out into the lane TRIST follows them, closing the gate THADDEUS and DENYER enter the room DENYER is carrying a newspaper]

Cyril [out of sight, shrilly] Which way?

Trist [out of sight] Through Parker Street

Joyce [out of sight] Who walks with who?

Helen [out of sight] I walk with Cyril

[The sound of the chatter dies in the distance]

Denyer [to Thaddeus] Then I can put up the bill at once, Mr Mortimore?

Thaddeus [laying his hat upon the table on the left] Do, Denyer To-morrow—to-day—

Denyer I'll send a man round in the morning [Producing a note-book and writing in it] Let's see—your lease is seven, fourteen, twenty-one?

Thaddeus That's it

Denyer How much of the first seven is there to run—I ought to remember ?

Thaddeus Two years and a half from Michaelmas

Denyer Rent?

Thaddeus Forty

[The door opens a little way and PHYLLIS peeps in Her features are drawn, her lips white and set]

Denyer Fixtures at a valuation, I s'pose?

Thaddeus Ha, ha! The costly fixtures at a valuation

Denyer You may as well sell 'em, if they only fetch tuppence

[He sees PHYLLIS, who has entered softly]

Good afternoon, ma'am

Phyllis [in a low voice] Good afternoon

Thaddeus [turning to her] Phyl, dear! I met Mr Denyer in the lane [Gleefully] The bill goes up to-morrow—"house to let"—to-morrow morning—[to DENYER] first thing—

[PHYLLIS moves to the bay-window without speaking]

Denyer First thing [Putting his pocket-book away] Excuse me—you're on the look-out for a new residence?

Thaddeus Oh—er—one must live somewhere, Denyer

Denyer And a much superior house to this, Mr Mortimore, I lay a guinea

Thaddeus [walking about with his hands in his pockets] The children are springing up—getting to be tremendous people

Denyer [genially] Oh, come, sir! We know

Thaddeus [pausing in his walk] Eh?

Denyer Everybody in the town knows of your luck, and the family's [Picking up his hat and newspaper, which he has laid upon the ottoman] Here's another allusion to it in this week's Courier

Thaddeus The Courier?

Denyer [handing him the paper] Just out You keep it, I've got another at 'ome

[THADDEUS is searching the paper] Middle page—"Town Topics"

Thaddeus Thanks

Denyer Mr Hammond—he will poke his fun [Going to the window] P'raps you'll give us a call, sir?

Thaddeus [following him absently, reading] Yes, I'll call in

[DENYER turns to PHYLLIS, who is sitting in the chair by the bay-window]

Denyer Good-day, ma'am [In the garden, to THADDEUS, persuasively] Now you won't forget Gibson and Denyer, Mr Mortimore?

Thaddeus [at the window] I won't, I won't

Denyer The old firm [Opening the gate] What we haven't got on our books isn't worth considering, you take it from me

[He disappears, closing the gate THADDEUS comes back into the room]

Thaddeus Upon my soul, this is too bad of Hammond This'll annoy Jim and Stephen frightfully—drive 'em mad [Flinging the paper on to the settee by the piano] Oh, well ! [Putting his necktie in order at the mirror] By Jove, we've done it at last, old lady! "House to let," hey? I believe I'm keener about it than you are, now it's come to it What a sensation it'll cause at "Ivanhoe," and at the Crescent! I tell you what, you and I must have a solemn talk to-night—a parliament—when the children have gone to bed, a regular, serious talk [Turning] You know, I'm still for Cheltenham Cheltenham seems to me to offer so many advantages

[PHYLLIS rises slowly]



There's the town itself—bright and healthy, then the College, for Cyril As for its musical tastes—*[Breaking off and looking at the clock]* I say, do get your things on, Phyl *[Comparing his watch with the clock and then timing and winding it]* We shall catch it if we're not punctual

Phyllis I—I'm not going, Tad

Thaddeus Not going, dear?

Phyllis No—I *[He advances to the right of the piano solicitously]* I can't go

Thaddeus Aren't you up to it?

*[She moves to the open window and looks into the garden]*

Phyllis They won't—be back—for a long while?

Thaddeus The children, and Trist and Helen? Not for an hour or two

Phyllis *[turning]* Tad—that girl—that girl

Thaddeus Helen?

Phyllis *[coming forward a little]* We're robbing her, we're robbing her *[Shaking]* We're all robbing her

Thaddeus *[at her side]* You've got another bad attack of nerves this afternoon—an extra bad one—

Phyllis *[suddenly, grasping his coat]* Tad—I—I've broken down

Thaddeus Broken down?

Phyllis I've broken down under it I—I can't endure it

Thaddeus *[soothingly]* What—what—?

Phyllis Your brother—Edward—your brother—Edward

Thaddeus Yes?

Phyllis Everything—everything—belongs to her—Helen

Thaddeus My dear, the family were prepared to offer Helen—

Phyllis No, no! He left every penny to her—left it to her *[Staring into his face]* There was a will

Thaddeus A will?

Phyllis I saw it

Thaddeus You saw it?

Phyllis I read it—I had it in my hand

Thaddeus *[incredulously]* You did!

Phyllis Yes, I—I did away with it

Thaddeus Did away with it?

Phyllis Destroyed it

Thaddeus A will—Ned's will

*[PHYLLIS turns from him and sinks helplessly on to the settee by the fireplace]* THADDEUS stands looking down

*upon her in a half-frightened, half-puzzled way, then his face clears, and he looks at the clock again and speaks calmly]*

Phyl, I wish you'd let me have Chapman in Phyllis *[in a faint voice]* No—no—

Thaddeus My dear, we can afford a doctor now, if we require one That bromide stuff he prescribed for you once—that did you no end of good *[Going towards the door]* I'll send Kate

Phyllis *[raising herself]* Tad.

Thaddeus *[reassuringly]*. I'll stay with you till he comes

Phyllis Tad—*[getting to her feet]* you—you think I'm not right in my head Tad, I—I know what I'm saying I'm telling the truth I'm telling you the truth

Thaddeus A will ?

Phyllis *[at the round table]* Yes—yes—

Thaddeus No, no, you're talking nonsense *[He goes to the door and there pauses, his hand on the doorknob]* When—when ?

Phyllis When . . . ?

Thaddeus When did you see it?

Phyllis On the—on the Wednesday night

Thaddeus The Wednesday night?

Phyllis You remember—the night there was no night-nurse ?

Thaddeus I remember, of course

Phyllis Ann and Louisa had gone to the hotel to lie down, and—and I was alone with him

Thaddeus I remember it all perfectly

Phyllis *[moving towards the ottoman, supporting herself by the table]* I was with him from eight o'clock till nearly eleven

Thaddeus Till the others came back That was the night he—the night he sank

Phyllis Yes, it was just before then that he—that he

Thaddeus *[leaving the door]* Just before then ?

Phyllis It was just before the change set in that he—that he sent me downstairs

Thaddeus Downstairs?

Phyllis To the library

Thaddeus The library?

Phyllis With the keys

Thaddeus Keys?

Phyllis His bunch of keys

Thaddeus Sent you downstairs—to the library—with his keys?

Phyllis Yes

Thaddeus What for?

Phyllis To fetch something

Thaddeus Fetch something?

Phyllis From the safe

Thaddeus The safe?

Phyllis The safe in the library—[*sitting on the ottoman*] the safe in the bookcase in the library

Thaddeus [*coming to her*] What—what did he send you to fetch, dear?

Phyllis Some—some jewelry

Thaddeus Jewelry?

Phyllis Some pieces of jewelry He had some pieces of jewelry in his safe in the library, that he'd picked up, he said, at odd times, and he wanted to make me a present of one of them

Thaddeus Make you a present . ?

Phyllis As a keepsake [*Her elbows on her knees, digging her fingers into her hair*] It was about half-past nine I was sitting beside his bed, thinking he was asleep, and I found him looking at me He recollected seeing me when I was a child, he said, skating on the ponds at Claybrook, and he said he was sure I—I was a good wife to you—and a good mother to my children And then he spoke of the jewelry—and opened the drawer of the table by the bed—and took out his keys—and explained to me how to open the safe

Thaddeus [*his manner gradually changing as he listens to her recital*] You—you went down ?

Phyllis Yes

Thaddeus And—and ?

Phyllis And unlocked the safe And in the lower drawer I—I came across it

Thaddeus Came across ?

Phyllis He told me I should find four small boxes—and I could find only three—and that made me look into the drawer—and—and under a lot of other papers—I—I saw it

Thaddeus It?

Phyllis A big envelope, with "My Will" written upon it

[*There is a short silence, then THADDEUS seats himself upon the settee by the piano*]

Thaddeus [*in a whisper*] Well?

Phyllis [*raising her head*] I put it back into the drawer, and locked the safe, and went up-stairs with the jewelry Outside the bedroom door I found Heath I'd given him permission to run out for an hour, to get

some air, with Pearce and Sadler, the housemaids He asked me if they could do anything for me before they started I told him No, and that Mr Mortimore seemed brighter and stronger I heard him going down the servant's staircase, and then I went into the room—up to the bed—and—and he was altered

Thaddeus [*moistening his lips with his tongue*] Ned . ?

Phyllis His cheeks were more shrunk, and his jaw had dropped slightly, and his lips were quite blue, and his breathing was short and quick I measured the medicine which he was to have if there was any sign of collapse, and lifted him up and gave it to him Then I rang the bell, and by and by the woman from the kitchen answered it He was easier then—dozing, but I told her to put on her hat and jacket and go for Dr Oswald And then I stood watching him, and—and the idea—came to me

Thaddeus The—the idea?

Phyllis My head suddenly became very clear Every word of the argument in the train came back to me—

Thaddeus Argument?

Phyllis Between James and the others—in the train, going to Lanchpool, on the Tuesday—

Thaddeus Oh—oh, yes

Phyllis If Edward died, how much would he die worth? Who would come in for all his money? Would he remember the family, to the extent of a mourning ring or so, in his will? If he should die leaving no will! Of course Ned would leave a will, but—where did a man's money go to when he didn't leave a will?

Thaddeus [*under his breath*] To his next-of-kin

Phyllis [*rising painfully*] After a time, I—I went downstairs again At first I persuaded myself that I only wanted to replace the jewelry—that I didn't want to have to explain about the jewelry to Ann and Lou, [*moving about the room on the left*] but when I got downstairs, I knew what I was going to do And I did it as if it was the most ordinary thing in the world I put back the little boxes—and took out the big envelope—and locked up the safe again, and—read the will [*Pausing at the piano*] Everything—everything—to some person—some woman living in Paris [*Leaning upon the piano, a clenched hand against*

her brow] "Everything I die possessed of to Helen Thornhill, now or late of—" such-and-such an address, "spinster, absolutely", and she was to be his executrix—"sole executrix" That was all, except that he begged her to reward his old servants—his old servants at his house and at the brewery Just a few lines—on one side of a sheet of paper—

*Thaddeus* Written—in his own—hand?

*Phyllis* I think so

*Thaddeus* You—you've seen his writing—since

*Phyllis* [*leaving the piano*] Yes—I'm sure—in his own hand

*Thaddeus* [*heavily*] That clears it up, then

*Phyllis* Yes

*Thaddeus* He'd made his will—himself—himself

*Phyllis* [*her strength failing a little*] Three years ago I—noticed the date—[*dropping into the chair on the extreme left*] it was three years ago

[*Again there is a silence, then THADDEUS rises and walks about aimlessly*]

*Thaddeus* [*trying to collect his thoughts*] Yes—yes, this clears it up This clears it all up There was a will There was a will He didn't forget his child, he didn't forget her What fools—what fools we were to suppose he could have forgotten his daughter!

*Phyllis* [*writhing in her chair*] Oh, I didn't know—I didn't guess .! His daughter! [*Moaning*] Oh! oh!

*Thaddeus* Don't, don't, old lady

[*She continues her moaning*]  
Oh, don't, don't! Let's think, let's think, now; let's think [*He seats himself opposite to her*] Now, let's think Helen—this'll put Helen in a different position entirely, a different position entirely—won't it? I—I wonder—I wonder what's the proper course for the family to take [*Stretching out a trembling hand to her*] You'll have to write down—to write down carefully—very carefully—[*Breaking off, with a change of tone*] Phyl

*Phyllis* Oh! oh!

*Thaddeus* Don't, dear, don't! Phyllis, perhaps you—didn't destroy the will, not—actually—destroy it? [*Imploringly*] You didn't destroy it, dear!

*Phyllis* I did—I did—

*Thaddeus* [*leaning back in his chair,*

*dazed*] I—I'm afraid—it—it's rather—a serious matter—to—to destroy—

*Phyllis* [*starting up*] I did destroy it, I did destroy it [*Pacing the room on the right*] I kept it—I'd have burnt it then and there if there'd been a fire—but I kept it—I grew terrified at what I'd done—oh, I kept it till you left me at Roper's on the Thursday morning, and then I—I went on to the Ford Street bridge—and tore it into pieces—and threw them into the water. [*Wringing her hands*] Oh! oh!

*Thaddeus* [*his chin on his breast*] Well—well—we've got to go through with it We've got—to go—through— [*Rising and walking about unsteadily on the left*] Yes, yes, yes, what a difference it'll make to everybody—not only to Helen! What a difference it'll make at "Ivanhoe," and at the Crescent—and to Rose !

*Phyllis* They'll curse me! They'll curse me more than ever!

*Thaddeus* And to—to us!

*Phyllis* To us—the children !

*Thaddeus* [*shaking a finger at her across the piano, cunningly*] Ah—ah—ah, but when the affair's really settled, we'll still carry out our intention We—we'll still

*Phyllis* [*facing him*] Our intention? Our—?

*Thaddeus* Our intention—of leaving the town—

*Phyllis* [*wildly*] Leaving the town! Oh, my God, we shall have to leave the town!

*Thaddeus* [*recoiling*] Oh !

*Phyllis* Leave it as beggars and outcasts!

*Thaddeus* [*quietly*] Oh, yes, we shall—have—to leave the town—now

[*The door opens and a little maid-servant enters THADDEUS looks at her with dull eyes*]

*The Servant* Please, sir

*Thaddeus* Eh?

*The Servant* Maud's just come down from "Ivanhoe" They're waiting for you

*Thaddeus* W—waiting?

*The Servant* That's the message, sir Mr James and the family's waiting for Mr Thaddeus

*Thaddeus* Oh, I [*Taking out his watch and fingering it*] Yes, of course—[*To the servant*] I—I'm coming up

[*The servant withdraws THADDEUS picks up his hat from the table on the left and turns to PHYLLIS*]

Good-bye, dear [*Taking her in his arms, and kissing her, simply*] I—I'll go up [*He puts his hat on, finds his way to the door with uncertain steps, and disappears*]

## ACT THREE

The dining-room in JAMES MORTIMORE'S house in Singlehampton. In the rear wall there is an arched recess with a fireplace at the back of it, and on either side of the fireplace, within the recess, there is a chimney-seat. On the right of the recess a door opens into the room from a hall or passage.

Standing out in the middle of the room is a large, oblong dining-table, uncovered. On the table are a couple of inkstands, some pens, paper, and blotting-paper. Ten chairs are placed at regular intervals at the table—three at each side and two at the ends. Against the wall on the right, near the door, stands a heavy sideboard. On it are several pieces of ugly-looking, showy plate, a carafe of water and a tumbler, and, upon a tray, a decanter of red wine and some wine-glasses. Against the same wall there is a cabinet. In front of the cabinet there is a round table, covered with a white cloth, on which teacups and saucers are laid for ten persons. Also on the table are a tea-caddy and teapot, a plated kettle-stand, a plum-cake, and other accompaniments of afternoon tea. On each side of the tea-table there is an armchair belonging to the same set of chairs that surround the dining-table.

Against the left-hand wall is another heavy piece of furniture. Except for this, and the sideboard and the cabinet, the walls, below the dado rail, are bare.

The architecture, decorations, and furniture are pseudo-artistic and vulgar. The whole suggests the home of a common person of moderate means who has built himself a "fine house."

JAMES and STEPHEN are seated at the further side of the dining-table with a newspaper spread out before them. Standing by them, reading the paper over their husbands' shoulders, are ANN and LOUISA. ROSE is sitting, looking bored, at the right-hand end of the table, and PONTING, smoking a cigar, is pacing the room on the left. LOUISA and ROSE, the latter dressed in rich half-mourning, are wearing their hats.

James [*scowling at the paper*]. It's infamous.

Louisa Abominable!

Ann It oughtn't to be allowed, James.

Stephen Ah, now James is stabbed at as well as myself.

James The man's a blackguard, that's what he is.

Louisa His wife's a most unpleasant woman.

Stephen [*leaning back and wiping his spectacles*] Hitherto I have been the chief object of Mr Hammond's malice.

Louisa You'll soon have your revenge now, Stephen. [*To the others*] Stephen will soon have his revenge now.

James By George, I've half a mind to ask Vallance to give me his opinion on this!

Stephen We might consult Vallance, certainly.

Louisa And tell him what Mrs Hammond was.

Ann When she was plain Nelly Robson.

Stephen Sssh, sssh! Do, pray, keep the wife out of it.

Ponting [*looking at his watch as he walks across to the right*] I say, my friends, it's four o'clock, you know.

[*The MORTIMORES stiffen themselves and regard him coldly*].

Where are these lawyer chaps?

James [*folding the newspaper*] They're not in my pocket, Colonel.

Stephen No, we're not in the habit of carrying them about with us.

Louisa [*laughing silyly*] Oh, Stephen!

Rose We mustn't lose the—what's the train back, Toby?

Ponting [*behind her chair, annoyed*] Five fifty-seven.

Rose I shall be dead with fatigue, I've two parties to-night.

James Parties?

Rose [*to PONTING*] Destinn is singing at the Trench's, Toby.

Stephen [*rising*] H'm! Indeed?

Ann [*in an undertone, withdrawing with LOUISA to the fireplace*] Singing!

James [*rising*] So you're going to parties, are you, Rose? Pretty sharp work, with Ned only a month in his grave.

Ponting We're not conventional people.

Rose [*rising and walking away to the left*] No, we don't mourn openly.

*Ponting* We don't carry our hearts on our what-d'ye-call-it—sleeve

*Rose* And Edward wasn't in the least known in London society

*James* [*walking about on the right*] You knew him

*Ponting* [*seating himself on the nearer side of the dining-table in the middle chair*] In London, my friends, reg'lar mournin' is confined to the suburbs nowadays May I have an ash-tray?

*Rose* [*walking about on the left*] And we go to Harrogate on the twenty-ninth

*Ponting* Good Lord, yes; I'm kept devilish quiet there

[*ANN takes a metal ash-tray from the mantelpiece and gives it to STEPHEN, who almost flings it on to the table* The door opens, and a maid-servant enters followed by ELKIN and VALLANCE The lawyers carry small leather bags The servant retires]

*James* [*shaking hands heartily with ELKIN and VALLANCE*] Here you are!

*Elkin* A minute or two behind time—my fault

*Stephen* How d'ye do, Mr Elkin? [*Shaking hands with VALLANCE*] Good-afternoon

*Elkin* [*to PONTING*] How d'ye do?

*Ponting* [*shortly, not rising*] H'ah you?

*Vallance* [*shaking hands with ANN and LOUISA and bowing to ROSE*] How do you do?

*Elkin* [*to ROSE*]. Hope you're very well, Mrs Ponting

*Rose* Thanks

*Vallance* [*to PONTING*] Good-afternoon

[*PONTING nods in return*]

*Ponting* [*bringing the palm of his hand down upon the table*] Now, then!

*James* [*to ELKIN and VALLANCE, inviting them by a gesture to be seated*] Excuse the dining-room, gentlemen, looks more like business than the drawing-room

*Stephen* [*on the left*] Where's Tad?

*Ann* [*seating herself at the further side of the dining-table in the middle chair*] Yes, where's Tad?

*Louisa* [*sitting beside her*] Where are Tad and Phyllis?

*James* [*looking at his watch*] Five past, by my watch

*Rose* [*sitting at the left-hand end of the table*] Oh, never mind them

*James* [*to STEPHEN*] P'r'aps you told 'em four-thirty?

*Stephen* [*nettled*] Perhaps I told them! *James* All right, all right, don't flare up! P'r'aps I did, there was a talk of making it half-past

*Stephen* [*raising his arms*] On the day I go to press—

*James* Ring the bell [*Opening the door and calling*] Maud! Maud!

[*STEPHEN rings the bell ELKIN and VALLANCE are now seated, ELKIN in the further chair at the right-hand end of the dining-table, VALLANCE in the chair between ELKIN and ANN They open their bags and sort and arrange their papers*]

*Ponting* We shall be here till midnight

*James* Maud—!

*Rose* [*pushing her chair away from the table*] How vexing!

*Ponting* [*with a sneer*] I suppose one can buy a soot of pyjamas in the town, eh, Mrs James?

*Elkin* I sha'n't detain you long

[*The servant appears at the door*]

*James* Maud, run down to Nelson Villas—just as you are—

*Rose* [*satirically*] Don't hurry them, Jim. Phyllis is smartening herself up

*Stephen* [*seating himself in the further chair at the left-hand end of the dining-table, loudly*] Say we are waiting for Mr Thaddeus

*James* [*to the girl*] Mr James and the family are waiting for Mr Thaddeus [*As he closes the door*] Go along Collier Street, you may meet him

*Ponting* [*fussily*] We can deal with preliminaries, at any rate Kindly push that ash-tray a little nearer [*To VALLANCE*] Mr Vallance—

*James* [*leaving the door, resenting PONTING's assumption of authority*] I beg your pardon, Colonel, we'll give my brother another five minutes' grace, with your permission

*Ponting* [*shrugging his shoulders*] By all means—ten—twenty

*James* [*finding that he has the newspaper in his hand*] Oh—here ! [*Opening the paper*] While we're waiting for Tad—

*Stephen* Ah, yes Read it aloud, Jim

*Ponting* [*rising and moving away impatiently*] Tsch!

*James* Mr Vallance—Mr Elkin—oblige us by listening to this It's from the *Courier*

*Stephen* This week's *Courier*—published to-day—

*Vallance* [to ELKIN] One of our local papers

*James* Owned by a feller o' the name of Hammond [Reading] "Town Topics"

*Ann* He married a Miss Robson

*Louisa* A dreadful woman

*Stephen* Sssh, sssh! Mr Hammond's offensive remarks are usually directed against myself, but in this instance—

*James* [walking about as he reads] "A curious complication arises in connection with the estate of the late Mr Edward Mortimore of Lanchpool"

*Stephen* He doesn't cloak his attack, you see

*James* "As many of our readers are aware—[running his hands over his pockets] as many of our readers are aware—"

*Stephen* He has made them aware of it

*James* [to ANN] Where did I put them, mother?

*Ann* [producing her spectacles] Try mine, James

[ANN gives her spectacles to STEPHEN,

STEPHEN gives them to ROSE, and

ROSE presents them to JAMES]

*James* I'm getting as blear-eyed as Stephen [Resuming] "As many of our readers are aware, the whole of that gentleman's wealth passes, in consequence of his having died intestate, to a well-known Singlehampton family—"

*Louisa* That points to us

*Stephen* [irritably] Of course it does, of course it does

*Louisa* There's no better-known family in Singlehampton than ours

*Stephen* Sssh, sssh!

*James* "— two members of which—"

*Ann* The Mockfords were an older family—but where are the Mockfords?

*James* [to ANN] Give me a chance, Ann [Continuing] "— two members of which have been for many years prominently associated with the temperance movement in this town"

*Stephen* [rising] My brother James and myself

*James* [standing at the table, facing ELKIN and VALLANCE, in his oratorical manner] Twelve years ago, gentlemen, I was instrumental in founding the Singlehampton and Claybrook Temperance League—

*Louisa* Stephen was another of the founders

*Stephen* [joining JAMES] I was another

*James* And day in and day out I have devoted my best energies to furthering the objects of the League in Singlehampton and in Claybrook

*Stephen* Very materially aided by the *Times* and *Mirror*, a temperance organ

*James* And I submit that it's holding us up to ridicule and contempt—holding us up to public obloquy and derisions—

*Vallance* [to JAMES] What is your objection to the paragraph, Mr Mortimore?

*James* Objection!

*Elkin* There's more to come, I expect

*James* [grimly] Aye, a bit more [Sitting at the table] What d'ye think of this? [Reading] "When it is remembered that the late Mr Mortimore's fortune was derived from the brewing and the sale of beer—"

*Stephen* [sitting beside JAMES] The word "beer" is in italics

*Vallance* Oh, I see

*James* "— it will be understood that our two distinguished fellow-townsmen are placed in an extremely difficult position"

*Stephen* This is the most spiteful part of it

*James* "We have no doubt, however, that as conscientious men, they will prove fully equal to the occasion by either renouncing their share of their late brother's property or by dedicating it entirely to the advancement of the cause they have at heart" [Throwing the newspaper to ELKIN and VALLANCE] There it is, gentlemen

[In wandering round the room, PONTING has come upon the decanter of wine and the wine-glasses standing on the sideboard He is now filling a glass]

*Ponting* Every man has a right to his convictions [Taking the glass in his hand] A little alcohol hurts nobody—

*James* You won't find any in my house

*Ponting* What's this, then?

*James* Currant

*Ponting* [replacing the glass, with a wry face] My dear Mortimore

[He sits at the right-hand end of the table, beside ELKIN, and pries at the documents which ELKIN has taken from his bag VALLANCE and ELKIN are reading the paragraph together]

VALLANCE *drawing his chair closer to ELKIN'S for that purpose*]

James *[to VALLANCE]* Well, what's your opinion, Mr Vallance? Is that libelous, or isn't it?

Stephen Does it, or does it not, go beyond the bounds of fair comment—eh, Mr Elkin?

Vallance *[pacifically]* Oh, but aren't you attaching a great deal too much importance to this?

James Too much !

Elkin Why not ignore it?

Stephen Ignore it!

Vallance Treat it as a piece of pure chaff—badinage

Elkin In more or less bad taste

Vallance Take no notice of it whatever

James *[rising and walking away to the fireplace]* Take no notice of it! The townspeople will take notice of it pretty quickly

Stephen *[rising]* In my opinion, that paragraph renders our position in the League absolutely untenable

James *[standing over VALLANCE]* Unless that paragraph is apologized for, withdrawn—

Stephen *[standing over ELKIN]* Explained away—

James Aye, explained away—

Vallance I don't see how it can be explained away

Elkin *[dryly]* The proposition is a perfectly accurate one, whatever you may think of the corollary

Vallance You are ardent advocates of temperance

Elkin Your late brother's property was amassed mainly by beer

Vallance It can hardly be explained away

Stephen *[walking to the left]* Good heavens above, I've explained things away often enough in my paper!

James *[coming forward on the right]* This does us at the League, then—does us, knocks our influence into a cocked hat

Elkin *[to JAMES and STEPHEN]* After all, gentlemen, when you come to reflect upon it, the laugh is with you

James Is it?

Elkin *[genially]* The *Courier* has its little joke, but *you've* got the money, remember

James Oh, that's true

Stephen *[walking about on the left]* That's true, that's true

James *[walking about on the right,*

*rattling his loose cash]* Aye, we've got the mopuses

Rose *[tilting her chair on its hind legs]* I say, Jim—Stephen—why don't you two boys, between you, present the League with a handsome hall—?

James *[pausing in his walk]* Hall?

Rose Build the temperance folk a meeting-place of their own—a headquarters

Ponting *[mischievously]* He, he, he! That 'ud smooth 'em down Capital idea, Rosie!

James and Stephen Wel

James I'd see 'em damned first *[To the ladies]* I beg pardon

Ann *[with unusual animation]* No, no, you're quite right, James

Stephen *[at the fireplace]* That would be playing into Mr Hammond's hands with a vengeance

James *[walking across to the left, derisively]* Ha! Wouldn't Hammond crow, hey! Ha, ha, ha!

Stephen No, if the situation becomes too acute—painful as it would be to me—I shall resign

James *[determinedly]* Resign

Stephen Sever my connection with the League

James Leave 'em to swill themselves with their lemonade and boiled tea!

Stephen *[coming forward on the right]* And to find out how they get on without us

James Serve 'em up in their own juice!

Stephen *[meeting JAMES in the middle of the room on the nearer side of the dining-table]* You know, Jim, we've never gone quite so far—you and I—with the principles of temperance as some

James *[eyeing him curiously]* Never gone so far ?

Stephen As old Bob Amphlett, for example—never

James Oh, yes, we have, and a deuced sight further

Stephen Excuse me—I've *always* been for moderation rather than for total abstinence

James Have yer? *[Walking away to the left]* First I've heard of it

Stephen Anyhow, a man may broaden his views with years and experience *[Argumentatively]* Take the hygienic aspect of the case Only the other day, Sir Vincent West, probably the ablest physician in England—



Louisa [abruptly] Stephen!

Stephen [angrily] Don't interrupt me

Louisa [with energy, rising] I've maintained it throughout my life—it's nothing new from my lips—

Stephen What—?

Louisa There are two sides to every question

Stephen [hurrying round the table to join LOUISA] Exactly—exactly—as Lou says—

Louisa It's been almost a second religion with me I've preached it in season and out of season—

Stephen [with conviction] There are two sides—

Louisa Two sides to every question

James [to ANN, pointing to the door] Mother

[The door has been opened by another maid-servant, who carries a tray on which are a plated kettle, a dish of toast, and a plentiful supply of bread-and-butter. The girl remains in the doorway. ANN rises and goes to her and takes the kettle from the tray. JAMES comes forward and seats himself on the nearer side of the dining-table in the middle chair]

Look here, I don't wait another minute for the Tads—not a second

Ponting Ah!

[LOUISA follows ANN and takes the toast and the bread-and-butter from the servant, who then disappears, closing the door]

Stephen [again sitting in the further chair at the left-hand end of the dining-table] Inexcusable of them—inexcusable

[ANN and LOUISA come to the tea-table and, drawing the two armchairs up to it, seat themselves and prepare the tea. The kettle is set upon the stand, the spirit-lamp is lighted, ANN measures the tea from the caddy into the pot, and LOUISA cuts the plum-cake]

James Mr Elkin—Mr Vallance—

Ponting Now, Mr Vallance, now, Mr Elkin!

Elkin [to VALLANCE] Will you ?

Vallance No, no—you

Elkin Well gentlemen—[to ROSE] Mrs Ponting—Mr Vallance and I have to report to you that we've received no communication of any kind in answer to our circulars and advertisements—

[ANN is making a clatter with the kettle]

James [to ANN] Steady, mother

Ponting [to the ladies at the tea-table] Sssh, sssh, sssh!

Elkin No communication from any solicitor who has prepared a will for your late brother, nor from anybody who has knowingly witnessed a will executed by him

Stephen Mr Vallance has apprised us of this already

James [raising a hand] Order! There's a formal way of doing things and a lax way

Stephen I merely mentioned—

[PONTING raps the table sharply with his knuckles]

Elkin I may say that, in addition to the issuing of the circulars and advertisements, I have made search in every place I could think of, and have inquired of every person likely to be of help in the matter. In fact, I've taken every possible step to find, or trace, a will

Vallance Without success

Elkin Without success

James [magnanimously] And I say that the family bears no grudge to Mr Elkin for doing his duty

Stephen [in the same spirit] Hear, hear!

Ponting [testily] Of course not, of course not

Rose It's all the more satisfactory, it seems to me, that he has worried round

James The family thanks Mr Elkin.

Stephen We thank Mr Elkin

Elkin [after a stiff inclination of the head] The only other observation I wish to make is that several gentlemen employed in the office of the brewery in Linchpool have at different times witnessed the late Mr Mortimore's signature to documents which have apparently required the attestation of two witnesses

Ponting [curtly] That amounts to nothing

James There are a good many documents, aren't there, where two witnesses are required to a signature?

Elkin Deeds under seal, certainly

Stephen I remember having to sign, some years ago—

[PONTING again raps the table]

Vallance But none of these gentlemen at the brewery can recall that any particular document appeared to him to be a will, which is not a document under seal



*James* Besides, a man signing a will always tells the witnesses that it is his will they're witnessing, doesn't he, Mr Vallance?

*Vallance* A solicitor would, in the ordinary course of practice, inform the witnesses to a will of the nature of the document they were attesting, undoubtedly

*Elkin* Granted, but a testator, supposing he were executing his will in his own house or office, and not in the presence of a solicitor, is under no legal necessity to do so, and may omit to do so.

*James* [rolling about in his chair] Oh, well, we needn't—

*Ponting* [looking at his watch] In heaven's name—!

*Stephen* We needn't go into all this

*Elkin* No, no, I simply draw attention to the point [Unfolding a document] Well, gentlemen—Mrs Ponting—this is a statement—[handing another document to VALLANCE] here is a copy of it, Mr Vallance—this is a statement of particulars of stocks, shares, and other items of estate, with their values at the death of the late Mr Mortimore, and a schedule of the debts so far as they are known to me

[There is a general movement JAMES rises and goes to VALLANCE STEPHEN also rises, stretching out an eager hand towards VALLANCE ROSE draws nearer to the table, PONTING still closer to ELKIN ANN and LOUISA, too, show a disposition to desert the tea-table]

*James* [to ANN, as he passes her] You get on with the tea, mother [To VALLANCE] Allow me, Mr Vallance

[VALLANCE gives him the duplicate of the statement]

*Ponting* What's it come out at? What's it come out at?

*Stephen* What's it come out at?

*Rose* Yes, what does it come out at?  
*Jim*

*Stephen* Jim

[JAMES joins STEPHEN, and they examine the duplicate together ROSE rises and endeavors to read it with them]

*Elkin* I estimate the gross value of the estate, which, as you will see, consists entirely of personal property, at one hundred and ninety-two thousand pounds

*Ponting* The gross value

*Stephen* Yes, but what do we get?

*Ponting and Rose* What do we get?

*James* After all deductions

*Elkin* Roughly speaking, after payment of debts, death duties, and expenses, there will be about a hundred and seventy thousand pounds to divide

[Those who are standing sit again JAMES seats himself next to STEPHEN and, with pen and ink, they make calculations on paper PONTING does the same ROSE, closing her eyes, fans herself happily, and the two ladies at the tea-table resume their preparations with beaming countenances ELKIN leans back in his chair]

Mr Vallance .

*Vallance* [to ROSE, JAMES, and STEPHEN]

Mrs Ponting and gentlemen—

[PONTING raps the table and JAMES and STEPHEN look up]

I advise you that, as next-of-kin of the late Mr Mortimore, if you are satisfied—and in my opinion you may reasonably be satisfied—that he died intestate—I advise you that any one or more of you, not exceeding three,

[The door opens quietly and THADDEUS appears He is very pale, but is outwardly calm After a look in the direction of the table, he closes the door] may apply for Letters of Administration of your late brother's estate It isn't necessary or usual, however, I may tell you, to have more than one administrator, and I suggest—

[Hearing the click of the lock as THADDEUS shuts the door, everybody turns and glances at him]

*Rose* [opening her eyes] Here's Tad

*Stephen* [grumpily] Oh .

*Rose* [tossing THADDEUS a greeting] Hallo!

*James* [to THADDEUS, with a growl] Oh, you've arrived

*Stephen* [to THADDEUS] Did I say four or half-past—?

*Louisa* Where's Phyllis?

*Ann* Where's Phyllis?

*Thaddeus* [in a low voice, advancing] She—she didn't feel well enough—

[PONTING raps the inkstand with his penholder]

*James* [pointing to the chair beside him, imperatively] Sit down, sit down

[THADDEUS sits, his elbows on the table, his eyes cast down]

Mr Vallance

Vallance [to THADDEUS] Good-afternoon,  
Mr Mortimore

Elkin [nodding to THADDEUS] How d'ye  
do?

Thaddeus [almost inaudibly] Good-after-  
noon

Vallance [to the others] I suppose we  
needn't go back ?

A Murmur No, no, no, no

James [pushing the duplicate of the state-  
ment under THADDEUS's eyes] A hundred  
and seventy thousand pounds to divide

Stephen A hundred and seventy thousand

Ponting [finishing his sum] Forty-two  
thousand five hundred apiece

Vallance [resuming] I was saying that  
it isn't usual to have more than one ad-  
ministrator, and I was about to suggest  
that the best course will be for you, Mr  
James, to act in that capacity, and for you,  
Mr Stephen, and you, Mr Thaddeus, or  
one of you, and Colonel Ponting, to be the  
sureties to the bond for the due administra-  
tion of the estate

James [cheerfully] I'm in your hands,  
Mr Vallance

Stephen I'm agreeable

Ponting And I

Vallance The procedure is thus—perhaps  
I'd better explain it [Producing a form of  
"Oath for Administrators" which is among  
his papers] The intended administrator will  
make an affidavit stating when and where  
the deceased died, that he died intestate,

[THADDEUS looks up]  
a bachelor without a parent, and that the  
deponent is a natural and lawful brother  
and one of the next-of-kin of the de-  
ceased—

Thaddeus [touching VALLANCE's arm]  
Mr Vallance

Vallance Eh?

Thaddeus We—we mustn't go on with  
this

Vallance I beg pardon?

Thaddeus The family mustn't go on with  
this

Vallance Mustn't go on—?

James [to THADDEUS] What a'yer talking  
about?

Thaddeus [after a hurried look round]  
There—there was a will

Vallance A will?

Thaddeus He—he made a will

James Who did?

Thaddeus Edward He—he left a will  
James [roughly] What the—!

Elkin [to JAMES, interrupting him] One  
moment Your brother has something to  
say to us, Mr Mortimore

Stephen What—what's he mean by—?

Elkin [to STEPHEN] Please! [To THAD-  
DEUS] Yes, sir?

[THADDEUS is silent]

What about a will?

[THADDEUS is still silent]

Eh?

Thaddeus I—I saw it

Elkin Saw a will?

Thaddeus I—I opened it—I—I read  
it—

Elkin Read it?

Thaddeus I—tore it up—got rid of it

[Again there is silence, the MORTIMORES  
and the PONTINGS sitting open-  
mouthed and motionless]

Elkin [after a while] Mr Vallance, I  
think we ought to tell Mr Mortimore that  
he appears to be making a confession of the  
gravest kind—

Vallance Yes

Elkin One that puts him in a very serious  
position

Vallance [to THADDEUS, after a further  
pause] Mr Mortimore ?

[THADDEUS makes no response]

Elkin If, understanding that, he chooses  
to continue, there is nothing to prevent our  
hearing him

Thaddeus [looking straight before him,  
his arms still upon the table, locking and  
unlocking his hands as he speaks] It—  
it happened on the Wednesday night—in  
Cannon Row—in Ned's house—the night  
before he died—the night we were left with-  
out a nurse

[Another pause VALLANCE takes a sheet  
of paper and selects a pen ELKIN  
pushes the inkstand nearer to him]  
Mrs James—and—and Mrs Stephen—my  
—my sisters-in-law—

[ANN and LOUISA get to their feet and  
advance a step or two]

Elkin [hearing the rustle of their skirts  
and turning to them] Keep your seats,  
ladies, please

[They sit again, drawing their chairs  
close together]

Thaddeus My sisters-in-law had gone  
home—that is, to their hotel—to get a few

hours' sleep in case of their having to sit up through the night Jim and Stephen and I were out and about, trying to find a night-nurse who'd take Nurse Ralston's place temporarily At about nine o'clock, I looked in at Cannon Row, to see how things were getting on

*Vallance* [*writing*] The Wednesday? Mr Edward Mortimore dying on Thursday, the twentieth of June—

*Elkin* On the morning of Thursday, the twentieth

*Vallance* That makes the Wednesday we are speaking of, Wednesday, June the nineteenth

*Elkin* [*to THADDEUS*]. You looked in at Cannon Row—?

*Vallance* At about nine o'clock on the night of Wednesday, June the nineteenth

*Thaddeus* I—I went upstairs and sat by Ned's bed, and by and by he began talking to me about—about Phyllis He—he'd taken rather a fancy to her, he said, and he wanted to give her a memento—a keepsake

*Elkin* Phyllis . ?

*Vallance* [*to ELKIN*] His wife [*To THADDEUS*] Your wife? [*THADDEUS nods*]

*Elkin* [*recollecting*] Of course

*Thaddeus* [*moistening his lips with his tongue*] He—he had some little bits of jewelry in his safe, and he—he asked me to go downstairs and—and to bring them up to him

*Elkin* [*keenly*] In his safe?

*Vallance* The safe in the library?

[*THADDEUS nods again*]

*Elkin* Quite so

*Vallance* And—er—

*Thaddeus* He—he gave me his keys, and I—I went down—I

[*He stops suddenly, and VALLANCE glances at him Noticing his extreme pallor, VALLANCE looks round the room Seeing the water-bottle upon the sideboard, VALLANCE rises and fills the tumbler Returning to the table, he places the glass before THADDEUS and resumes his seat*]

*Thaddeus* [*after a gulp of water*] It was—it was in the drawer of the safe—the drawer

*Elkin* What was?

*Thaddeus* [*wiping his mouth with his handkerchief*] A large envelope—a large envelope—the envelope containing the will

*Vallance* How did you know?

*Thaddeus* "My Will" was written on it  
*Vallance* [*writing*] "My Will"

*Elkin* On the envelope?

[*THADDEUS nods*]

You say you opened it?

[*THADDEUS nods*]

*Vallance* Opened the envelope

*Elkin* And inside—you found . . . ?

*Vallance* What did you find?

*Thaddeus* Ned's will

*Vallance* [*writing*] What appeared to be your brother Edward's will

*Elkin* You read it? [*THADDEUS nods*]

You recollect who was interested under it?

[*THADDEUS nods*]

Will you tell us?

[*The MORTIMORES and the PONTINGS crane their necks forward, listening breathlessly*]

*Thaddeus* He left everything—[*taking another gulp of water*] everything—to Miss Thornhill

[*There is a slight, undecided movement on the part of the MORTIMORES and the PONTINGS*]

*Elkin* [*calmly but firmly*] Keep your seats, keep your seats, please [*To THADDEUS*] Can you recall the general form of the will?

*Thaddeus* [*straining his memory*] Everything he had—died possessed of—to Helen Thornhill—spinster—of some address in Paris—absolutely And—and he appointed her his sole executrix

*Elkin* Do you recollect the date?

*Thaddeus* Date ?

*Elkin* Did you observe the date of the will?

*Thaddeus* [*quichly*] Oh, yes, it was made three years ago

*Elkin* [*to VALLANCE*] When she came of age

*Thaddeus* Oh, and he asked her to remember his servants—old servants at the brewery and in Cannon Row [*Leaning back, exhausted*] There was nothing else It was very short—written by Ned

*Elkin* The whole of it?

[*THADDEUS nods, with half-closed eyes*]  
The whole of it was in his handwriting?

[*THADDEUS nods again*]

Ah! [*To VALLANCE, with a note of triumph in his voice*] A holograph will, Mr Vallance, prepared by the man himself

*Vallance* [*now taking up the questioning of THADDEUS*] Tell me, Mr Mortimore—

have you any exact recollection as to whether this document, which you describe as a will, was duly signed and witnessed?

*Thaddeus [rousing himself]* It was—it was—signed by Ned

*Vallance* Was it signed, not only by your brother, but by two witnesses under an attestation clause stating that the testator signed in the joint presence of those witnesses and that each of them signed in his presence?

*Thaddeus* I—I don't recollect that

*Vallance [writing]* You've no recollection of that

[JAMES, STEPHEN, and PONTING stir themselves]

*James [hoarsely]* He doesn't recollect that, Mr Vallance

*Stephen [in quavering tones]* No, he—he doesn't recollect that

*Ponting [pulling at his moustache with trembling fingers]* That's most important, Mr Vallance, isn't it—isn't it?

*Vallance [to THADDEUS, not heeding the interruption]* You say you destroyed this document—

*Elkin* Tore it up

*Vallance* When—and where? In the room—in the library?

*Thaddeus [thinking]* N-no—out of doors

*Vallance* Out of doors When?

*Thaddeus [at a loss]* When ?

*Vallance* When? [*Looking at him in surprise*] You can't remember?

*Thaddeus [recollecting]* Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes Some time between ten and eleven on the Thursday morning, after I left Phyllis—after I left my wife at Roper's to be measured for her black

*Vallance [writing]* What did you do then?

*Thaddeus [readily]* I went to Ford Street bridge, and tore up the paper, and dropped the pieces into the Linch

*Vallance [writing]* Into the river

*Elkin* One more question, Mr Mortimore—to make your motive perfectly clear to us May we assume that, on the night of June the nineteenth, you were sufficiently acquainted with the law of intestacy to know that, if this dying man left no will, you would be likely to benefit considerably?

*Thaddeus* Well, I—I had—the idea

*Elkin* The idea?

*Thaddeus* I—I— [*recollecting*] Oh, yes,

there'd been a discussion in the train, you see, on the Tuesday, going to Linchpool—*Elkin* Discussion?

*Thaddeus* Among us all, as to how a man's money is disposed of, if he dies intestate

*Elkin [nodding]* Precisely [*To JAMES and STEPHEN*] You remember that conversation taking place, gentlemen?

*James* Oh, I—I dessay

*Elkin [to THADDEUS]* So that, when you came upon the envelope with the endorsement upon it—"My Will" ?

*Thaddeus [leaning his head upon his hands]* Yes—yes

*Vallance [running his eyes over his notes, to THADDEUS]* Have you anything to add, Mr Mortimore?

*Thaddeus [in a muffled voice]* No [*Quickly*] Oh, there is one thing I should like to add [*Brokenly*] With regard to Miss Thornhill—I—I hope you'll bear in mind that I—that none of us—heard from Mr Elkin of the existence of a child—a daughter—till the Thursday—middle-day

*Elkin* That is so

*Thaddeus* It doesn't make it much better, only—a girl—alone in the world—one wouldn't—[*breaking off*] no, I've nothing more to say

*Elkin [to THADDEUS]* And we may take it that your present act, Mr Mortimore, is an act of conscience, purely?

[*THADDEUS inclines his head There is silence again, the MORTIMORES and the PONTINGS presenting a picture of utter wretchedness The ladies' tears begin to flow*]

*James [after a time, speaking with some difficulty]* Well—

*Stephen [piteously]* Mr Vallance ?

*James* What—what's to be done, Mr Vallance?

*Ponting [to the ladies]* For God's sake, be quiet!

*James [with a clenched fist on the table]* What we want to know is—what we want to know is—who does my brother Edward's money belong to now—her or us?

*Stephen [in agony]* Her!

*Ponting* Don't be a damn fool, Mortimore!

*Vallance* Well, gentlemen, I confess I am hardly prepared to express an opinion off-hand on the legal aspect of the case—

*Ponting* The will's torn up—it's destroyed—!

*Stephen* It's destroyed—gone—gone!

*Ponting* Gone

*Vallance* But I need not remind you, there is another aspect—

*Ponting* I don't care a rap for any other aspect—

*Stephen* We want the law explained to us—the law—

*Ponting* The law—!

*James* [to ELKIN] Mr Elkin . . . ?

*Elkin* You appeal to me, gentlemen?

*Stephen and Ponting* Yes—yes .

*Elkin* Then I feel bound to tell you that I shall advise Miss Thornhill, as the executrix named in the will, to apply to the Court for probate of its substance and effect—

*Vallance* [to ELKIN] Ask the Court to presume the will to have been made in due form?

*Elkin* Decidedly

[STEPHEN and PONTING fall back in their seats in a stupor, and once more there is silence, broken only by the sound of the women sniveling ELKIN and VALLANCE slowly proceed to collect their papers]

*James* [turning upon THADDEUS, brutally] Have you—have you told Phyllis—have you told your wife what you've been up to?

[At the mention of PHYLLIS, there is a movement of indignation on the part of the ladies]

*Rose* Ha!

*James* [to THADDEUS] Have yer?

*Thaddeus* Y-yes—just before I came out [Weakly] That—that's what made me so late

*James* [between his teeth] What does she think of yer?

*Thaddeus* Oh, she—she's dreadfully—cut up—of course

*Rose* [hysterically] The jewelry! Ha, ha, ha! [Rising] She's managed to get hold of some of the jewelry, at any rate

*Ann* [with a sob] Yes, she—she managed that

*Louisa* [mopping her face] She's kept that from us artfully enough

[ROSE goes over to ANN and LOUISA, who rise to receive her]

*Rose* Ha, ha! Edward's "little bits" of jewelry!

*Ann* Little bits!

*Rose* They're little bits that are left  
*Louisa* How many did she have of them, I wonder!

*Rose* She shall be made to restore them—

*Louisa* Every one of them

*Thaddeus* No, no, no— [Stretching out a hand towards the ladies] Rosie—Ann—Lou—Phyllis hadn't any of the jewelry—not a scrap I put it all back into the safe. I—I swear she hadn't any of it

*Elkin* Why did you do that?

*Thaddeus* [agitatedly] Why, you see, Mr Elkin, when I carried it up-stairs, I found my brother Edward in a state of collapse—a sort of faint—

*Elkin* [with a nod] Ah—

*Thaddeus* And Phyllis—my wife—she sent me off at once for the doctor It was on the Wednesday evening, you know—

*Vallance* [picking up his ears] Your wife, Mr Mortimore—?

*Thaddeus* It was on the Wednesday evening that the change set in

*Vallance* [to THADDEUS] Your wife sent you off at once . ?

*Thaddeus* [to VALLANCE]. To fetch the doctor

*Vallance* [raising his eyebrows] Oh, Mrs Mortimore was in the house while all this was going on?

*Thaddeus* Y-yes, she was left in charge of him—in charge of Ned—

*Elkin* [To VALLANCE, in explanation] To allow these other ladies to rest, preparatory to their taking charge later

*Thaddeus* Yes

*Vallance* I hadn't gathered—

[JAMES has been sitting glaring into space, thoughtfully]

*James* Hold hard [To THADDEUS] You didn't go for the doctor

*Thaddeus* Yes, I—I went—

*Stephen* [awakening from his trance]. Phyllis sent the cook for the doctor

*Thaddeus* Yes, yes, you're quite right The cook was the first to go

*Elkin* [to THADDEUS] You followed?

*Thaddeus* I followed

*James* [knitting his brows] It must have been a good time afterwards

*Thaddeus* Y-yes, perhaps it was

*James* I was at Dr Oswald's when the woman arrived The doctor was out, and—

*Vallance* [to THADDEUS] You said your wife sent you at once

*Thaddeus* Told me to go at once There

—there was the jewelry to put back into the safe

Vallance [*eying THADDEUS*] What time was it when you got to the doctor's?

Thaddeus Oh—ten, I should say—or a quarter-past

James [*shaking his head*] No I sat there, waiting for Dr Oswald to come in—

Stephen [*to THADDEUS*] Besides, that couldn't have been, you were with me then

James [*to STEPHEN*] Was he?

Stephen Why, yes, he and I were at the Nurses' Home in Wharton Street from half-past nine till ten

James Half-past nine—?

Stephen [*becoming more confident as he proceeds*] And we never left each other till we went back to Cannon Row

Vallance Let us understand this—

Ponting [*having gradually revived, eagerly*] Yes—yes—[*to the ladies*] Sssh!

Stephen And, what's more, we allowed ourselves a quarter of an hour to walk to Wharton Street

James [*quietly, looking round*] Hallo

Thaddeus It—it's evident that I—that I'm mistaken in thinking that I—that I went to Dr Oswald's—

Vallance Mistaken?

Thaddeus I—I suppose that, as the woman had already gone, I—I considered it—wasn't necessary [*To ELKIN and VALLANCE, passing his hand before his eyes*] You must excuse my stupidity, gentlemen

Vallance [*to THADDEUS, distrustfully*] Then, according to your brother Stephen, Mr Mortimore, you were in Cannon Row, on the occasion of this particular visit, no longer than from nine o'clock till a quarter past?

Stephen Not so long, because we met, by arrangement, at a quarter-past nine, in the hall of the Grand Hotel—

James The hotel's six or seven minutes' walk from Cannon Row—

Ponting Quite, quite

Thaddeus [*a little wildly*] I said I called in at Cannon Row at about nine o'clock It may have been half-past eight, it may have been eight—

James Ann and Lou didn't leave Cannon Row till past eight—

Louisa [*standing, with ANN and ROSE, by the tea-table*] It had gone eight—

James I walked 'em round to the Grand—

Stephen The three of us walked with them to the Grand—!

Louisa All three—

James So we did

Stephen [*excitedly*] And then Thaddeus went off to the Clarence Hospital with a note from Dr Oswald—

James By George, yes!

Stephen I left him opposite the Exchange—it must have been nearly half-past eight then!

[JAMES rises *The ladies draw nearer to the dining-table*]

Thaddeus Ah, but I didn't go to the hospital—I didn't go to the hospital—

Stephen [*rising*] Yes, you did You brought a note back from the hospital, for us to take to Wharton Street—

Vallance [*to ELKIN*] How far is the Clarence Hospital from the Exchange?

Elkin A ten minutes' drive It's on the other side of the water

Thaddeus I—I—I'd forgotten the hospital—

James [*scowling at THADDEUS*] Forgotten—?

Thaddeus I—I—I mean I—I thought the hospital came later—after I'd been at Wharton Street

James [*going to VALLANCE and tapping him on the shoulder*] Mr Vallance—

Thaddeus I—I must have gone to Cannon Row between my return from the hospital and my meeting Stephen at the Grand—

James [*to ELKIN and VALLANCE*] Why, he couldn't have done it, gentlemen—

Ponting Impossible!

Stephen It's obvious, he couldn't have done it

Thaddeus I—I was only a few minutes at the hospital—

Elkin [*scribbling on the back of a document*] Oh, yes, he could have done it—barely—

Vallance [*making a mental calculation*] Assuming that he left his brother at the Exchange at eight-twenty—

Elkin Ten minutes to the hospital

Vallance If he drove there—

Thaddeus I did drive—I did drive—

Ponting [*also figuring it out on paper*] Ten minutes back—

Elkin Ten minutes at the hospital—

*Ponting* Eight-fifty—

*Thaddeus* Eight-fifty in Cannon Row! That was it—that was it, Mr Elkin—

*James* Give him twenty minutes in Cannon Row—give it him! He couldn't have done all he says he did in the time, gentlemen—

*Stephen* He couldn't have done it—

*Ponting* Impossible!

*Elkin* [to PONTING] No, no, please—not impossible

*Vallance* [to STEPHEN] When you met Mr Thaddeus Mortimore—you—when you met him in the hall of the Grand Hotel, before starting for Wharton Street, did he say anything to you as to his having just called at the house?

*Stephen* No

*Vallance* Nothing as to an alarming change in your brother's condition?

*Stephen* Not a syllable

*James* [to ELKIN and VALLANCE] Oh, there's a screw loose here, gentlemen, surely?

*Stephen* [joining JAMES] That is most extraordinary, Mr Vallance—isn't it? Not a syllable!

[ANN and LOUISA join their husbands, and the four gather round ELKIN and VALLANCE ROSE stands behind PONTING'S chair]

*Thaddeus* You see—Edward—Edward had rallied before I left Cannon Row He—he'd fallen into a nice, quiet sleep—

*James* All in twenty minutes, gentlemen—twenty minutes at the outside!

*Vallance* [to THADDEUS] Mr Mortimore—

*Ann* I remember—

*Ponting* [to ANN] Hold your tongue!

*Vallance* Mr Mortimore, who let you into the house in Cannon Row on the night of June the nineteenth—?

*Ponting* Ah, yes—

*Vallance* At any time between the hours of eight o'clock—?

*Stephen* And eleven

*Elkin* [to THADDEUS] Who gave you admittance—which of the servants?

*Thaddeus* I—I can't—I don't—[Blankly, addressing VALLANCE] was it the—the butler?

*Vallance* No, no, I ask you [To ELKIN] Have you the servants' addresses?

[ELKIN nods in reply]

*Thaddeus* But you wouldn't—you

wouldn't trust to the servants' memories as to—as to which of them opened the front door to me a month ago! [With an attempt at a laugh] It's ridiculous!

*Elkin* [reprovingly] Ah, now, now, Mr Mortimore!

*Thaddeus* [starting up from the table] Oh, it isn't fair—it isn't fair of you to badger me like this, it isn't fair!

*Vallance* Nobody desires to "badger" you—

*Thaddeus* Trip me up, then—confuse me [At the left-hand end of the table, clutching the back of a chair] The will—the will's the main point—Ned's will What does it matter—what can it matter, to a quarter of an hour or so—when I was in Cannon Row, or how long I was there? One would think, by the way I'm being treated, gentlemen, that I'd something to gain by this, instead of everything to lose—everything to lose!

*James* [coming forward, on the further side of the table] Don't you whine about what you've got to lose—!

*Stephen* [joining him] What about us!

*The Ladies* Us!

*Ponting* [hitting the table] Yes, confound you!

*Vallance* Colonel Ponting!

*Elkin* [to JAMES and STEPHEN] It seems to me—if my friend Mr Vallance will allow me to say so—that you are really bearing a little hardly on your brother Thaddeus

*Thaddeus* [gratefully] Thank you, Mr Elkin

*Elkin* What reason—what possible reason can there be for doubting his good faith?

*Thaddeus* Thank you.

*Elkin* Here is a man who forfeits a considerable sum of money, and deliberately places himself in peril, in order to right a wrong which nobody on earth would have suspected him of committing Mr Mortimore is accusing himself of a serious offense, not defending himself from it

*Vallance* [obstinately] What we beg of Mr Mortimore to do, for the sake of all parties, is to clear up certain inconsistencies in his story with his brothers' account of his movements and conduct on this Wednesday evening We are entitled to ask that

*James* Aye—entitled

*Stephen* and *Ponting* Entitled

*Elkin* [to JAMES and STEPHEN]. Yes, and



Mr Mortimore is equally entitled to refuse it

James, Stephen, and Ponting [indignantly] Oh—!

Thaddeus But I—I haven't refused I—I've done my best—

Elkin On the other hand, if he has no objection to her doing so, the person to assist you, I suggest—distressing as it may be to her—is the wife

Vallance [assentingly] The wife

[THADDEUS pushes aside the chair which he is holding and comes to the table]

Elkin She ought to be able to satisfy you as to what time he was with her—

Vallance [to everybody] By-the-bye, has she ever mentioned this visit of her husband's to Cannon Row—?

Ann and Louisa Never—never—

Elkin Attaching no importance to it But now—

Thaddeus [stretching out a quivering hand to them all] No No, no Don't you—don't you drag my wife into this I—I won't have my wife dragged into this—

James [in a blaze] Why not?

Stephen Why not?

The Ladies [indignantly] Ah—!

Thaddeus You—you leave my wife out of it—

James [to THADDEUS, furiously] Who the hell's your wife—!

Elkin and Vallance Gentlemen—gentlemen—

Louisa Who's Phyllis—!

Ann Who's she—!

Rose Ha!

James and Stephen [derisively] Ha, ha, ha!

Thaddeus Anyhow, I do object—I do object to your dragging her into it—[his show of courage flickering away] I—I do object—[Coming to the nearer side of the table, rather unsteadily] Mr Elkin—Mr Vallance—I—I don't think I can be of any further assistance to you to-day

[VALLANCE shrugs his shoulders at ELKIN]

Elkin [to THADDEUS, kindly] One minute—one minute more Mr Vallance has taken down your statement roughly [To VALLANCE] If you'll read us your notes, Mr Vallance, Mr Mortimore will tell us whether they are substantially correct—

[To THADDEUS] perhaps he will even be willing to attach his name to them

[With a nod of patient acquiescence,

THADDEUS sinks into the middle chair

VALLANCE prepares to read his notes, first making some additions to them]

James [to THADDEUS, from the other side of the table] Look here—!

Thaddeus [feebly] No—no more questions I—I'm advised I—I may refuse—

James Mr Vallance asked you just now about your conscience—

Thaddeus I—I'm not going to answer any more questions—

Stephen [to JAMES] It was Mr Elkin—

James I don't care a curse which it was—

Thaddeus No more questions—

James [leaning across the table towards THADDEUS, fiercely] When the devil did your conscience begin to prick you over this? Hey?

Stephen [to THADDEUS] Yes, you've been in excellent spirits apparently this last month—excellent spirits

James [hammering on the table] Hey?

Stephen [to ELKIN and VALLANCE] There was no sign of anything amiss when we were with him this afternoon, gentlemen—none whatever, I give you my word

James Less than two hours ago—not a symptom!

Stephen [to JAMES] He was gay enough at the club dinner on Tuesday night It was remarked—commented on

Louisa [at STEPHEN'S elbow, unconsciously] It's Phyllis who's been ill all the month, not Thaddeus

James [in the same way, with a hoarse laugh] Ha! If it had been his precious wife who'd come to us and told us this tale—

Stephen Yes, if it had been the lady—

James If it had been—

[Struck by the idea which occurs to him, JAMES breaks off THADDEUS doesn't stir JAMES, after a pause, continues thoughtfully]

If it had been

Stephen [holding his breath, to JAMES] Eh?

James [slowly stroking his beard] One might have—understood it

[ELKIN has been listening attentively]

Elkin [in a tone of polite interest] How long has Mrs Mortimore been indisposed?



James [*disturbed*] Oh—er—a few weeks—  
Vallance [*quietly*] Ever since ?

James [*with a nod*] Aye

[*ELKIN and VALLANCE look at each other inquiringly*]

Stephen [*staring into space*] Ever since—Edward—as a matter of fact—

Rose [*going to ANN and LOUISA*] What's wrong with her? What's wrong with his wife?

Ann [*obtusely*] She's not sleeping

Louisa [*looking from one to the other*] No—she isn't . .

[*There is a further pause, and then THADDEUS, slowly turning from the table, rises*]

Thaddeus [*in a strange voice, his hands fumbling at the buttons of his jacket*] Well, gentlemen—whatever my sins are—I—I decline to sit still and hear my wife insulted in this style. If it's all the same to you, I'll call round on Mr Vallance in the morning and—and sign the paper . .

[*While THADDEUS is speaking, JAMES and STEPHEN come forward on the left, ELKIN and VALLANCE on the right. The three women get together at the back and look on with wide-open eyes. The movement is made gradually and noiselessly, so that when THADDEUS turns to go he is startled at finding his way obstructed. After a time PONTING also leaves the table, watching the proceedings, with a falking jaw, from a little distance on the right*]

Elkin [*rubbing his chin meditatively, to THADDEUS*] Mr Mortimore, your wife traveled with you and the other members of the family to Linchpool on the Tuesday—?

James Aye, she was with us—

Elkin [*to THADDEUS*] She was in the railway carriage when the—when the discussion arose—?

Stephen Yes, yes—

Elkin The discussion as to where a man's money goes, in the absence of a will?

Ann [*from the other side of the table*] Yes—

Louisa [*close to ANN*] Of course she was

Elkin [*nodding*] H'm [*To THADDEUS*] I—I am most anxious not to pain you unnecessarily. Er—the conversation you had

with your brother Edward at the bedside, in reference to Mrs Thaddeus Mortimore—when he said that he—that he—

James [*breathing heavily*] He'd taken a fancy to her—

Elkin That he wished to make her a present of jewelry—she was within hearing during that talk?

Thaddeus [*avoiding everybody's gaze, his hands twitching involuntarily at his side*] She—she may have been

Elkin [*piercingly*] He was left in her charge, you know

Thaddeus She—she was moving about the room—

Elkin She would scarcely have been far away from him

Thaddeus [*moistening his lips with his tongue*] N-no

Elkin And when he handed you his keys and asked you to go down-stairs and open the safe—did she hear and witness that also?

Thaddeus She—she—very likely

Elkin [*raising his voice*] There was nothing at all confidential in this transaction between you and your brother?

Thaddeus Why—why should there have been?

Elkin Why should there have been? [*Coming a step nearer to him*] So that, feeling towards her as he did, there was no reason why, if you hadn't chanced to be on the spot—there was no reason why he shouldn't have held that conversation with her, and intrusted her with the keys

Thaddeus She—she was almost a stranger to him. He—he hadn't seen her since she was a child—

Elkin [*interrupting him*] Tell us—this illness of Mrs Mortimore's . . ?

Thaddeus My—my wife's a nervous, delicate woman—always has been

Elkin [*nodding*] Quite so

Thaddeus She—she was upset at being alone with Edward when he—when he swooned—

James That was the tale—

Elkin [*to THADDEUS*] Although you happened to be in the library, a floor or two below, at the time

Thaddeus He—he might have died suddenly, in her arms. She's a nervous, sensitive woman—

Elkin [*nodding*]. And she's been unwell ever since [*With an abrupt change of man-*

ner] Mr Mortimore, how is the lock of the safe opened?

Thaddeus Opened——?

Elkin [sharply] The safe in the library in Cannon Row—how do you open it?

[THADDEUS is silent]

Is it a simple lock, or is there anything unusual about it?

Thaddeus He—he gave me directions how to open it

Elkin Tell us

Thaddeus I—I forget

Elkin Forget?

Thaddeus It—it's gone from me

James [in a low voice] Gentlemen, you couldn't forget that—

Stephen [in the same way] You couldn't forget it

Elkin [to THADDEUS, solemnly] Mr Mortimore, are you sure that the conversation at the bedside didn't take place between your brother and your wife solely, and that it wasn't she who was sent down-stairs to fetch the jewelry?

Thaddeus [drawing himself up, with a last effort] Sure !

Elkin Are you positive that she didn't open the safe?

Thaddeus It—it's ridiculous

Elkin [quickly] When you took her to Roper's, the draper's, on the Thursday—you left her there?

Thaddeus Yes, I—I left her

Elkin Are you sure that she didn't then go on to the bridge, and tear up the will, and throw the pieces into the river?

Thaddeus I—I decline to answer any more questions—

Elkin [raising his voice again] Were you in Cannon Row, sir, on the night of June the nineteenth, for a single moment between eight o'clock and eleven—?

Thaddeus [losing his head completely] Ah! Ah! I know—I know! You mean to drag my wife into this!

Elkin [to THADDEUS] You were late in coming here this afternoon, Mr Mortimore—

Thaddeus [to ELKIN, threateningly] Don't you—don't you dare to do it—!

Elkin Owing, you say, to your having made a communication to Mrs Mortimore about this affair—

Thaddeus [clinging to the chair which is behind him] You—you leave my wife out of it—!

Elkin Are you sure that you were not delayed through having to receive a communication from her—?

Thaddeus [dropping into the chair] Don't you—drag her—into it—!

Elkin Are you sure that the story you have told us, substituting yourself for the principal person of that story, is not exactly the story which she has just told you?

[There is a pause PONTING goes to Rosi]

Mr Vallance

Vallance Yes?

Elkin I propose to see Mrs Mortimore in this matter, without delay

Vallance Very good

Elkin Will you . . ?

Vallance Certainly

[Quietly, VALLANCE returns to the table and, seating himself, again collects his papers ELKIN is following him]

James Mr Elkin—

Elkin [stopping] Eh?

James Stealing a will—destroying a will—what is it?

Elkin What is it?

James The law—what's the law?

Elkin [to JAMES] I—I'm sorry to have to say, sir—it's a felony

Thaddeus [with a look of horror] Oh !

[ANN and LOUISA come to JAMES and STEPHEN hurriedly ELKIN sits beside VALLANCE, and, picking up their bags from the floor, they put away their papers]

James [standing over THADDEUS] Well! Are yer proud of her now?

Stephen This is what his marriage has ended in!

Louisa I'm not in the least surprised

Ann Old Burdock's daughter!

Rose [from the other side of the table] Think heaven, my name isn't Mortimore!

Thaddeus [leaping to his feet in a frenzy] Don't you touch her! Don't any of you touch her! Don't you harm a hair of her head! [To the group on the left] You've helped to bring this on her! You've helped to make her life unendurable! You've helped to bring her to this! She's been a good wife to me Oh, my God, let me get her away! [Turning towards the door] Mr Elkin—Mr. Vallance—do let me get her away! Don't you harm a hair of her head!

Don't you touch her! [*At the door*] She's been a good wife to me! [*Opening the door and disappearing*] She's been a good wife to me!

James [*moving over to the right, shouting after THADDEUS*] Been a good wife to you, has she!

Stephen [*also moving to the right*]. A disgrace—a disgrace to the family!

Louisa [*following STEPHEN*] I always said so—I said so till I was tired—

James We've helped to bring her to this!

Ann [*sitting in a chair on the nearer side of the dining-table*] A vile creature!

Ponting [*coming forward on the left with ROSE*] Damn the woman! Damn the woman! My position is a cruel one—

Stephen [*raising his arms as he paces the room on the right*] Here's a triumph for Hammond!

James [*to PONTING, contemptuously*] Your position—!

Louisa Nellie Robson's got the better of me now

Ponting [*to JAMES*] I'm landed with an enormous house in Carlos Place—my builders are in it—

Rose [*pacing the room on the left*] Oh, we're in a shocking scrape! We're up to our necks—!

James [*approaching PONTING*] D'ye think you're the only sufferer—!

Stephen [*wildly*] A triumph for Hammond! A triumph for Hammond!

James [*to PONTING*] I've bought all that dirt at the bottom of Gordon Street—acres of it—!

Ponting [*passing him and walking away to the right*] That's your business

Stephen [*now, with LOUISA, at the further side of the dining-table*] Hammond and his filthy rag!

James [*going after PONTING, in a fury*] Aye, it is my business—

Ponting [*turning upon him viciously*] I wish to God, sir, I'd never seen or heard of you, or your family

Rose [*coming forward*] Oh, Toby, don't—!

James [*to PONTING*] You wish that, do yer—!

Ann [*rising and putting herself between JAMES and PONTING*] James!

Stephen [*shaking his fists in the air*] Blast Hammond and his filthy rag

James [*to PONTING*] You patronizing little pauper—!

Rose [*to JAMES*] Don't you speak to my husband like that—!

Ponting You're a pack of low, common people—!

Rose [*going to PONTING*] He's the only gentleman among you

James The only gentleman among us—!

Stephen [*coming forward, with LOUISA, on the left*] The only gentleman—!

[ANN is forcing JAMES, coaxingly, towards the left]

James We could have done without such a gentleman in our family— [*To ANN*] hey, mother?

Stephen [*advancing to PONTING, still followed by LOUISA*] Exceedingly well—exceedingly well—

Louisa [*taking STEPHEN'S arm*] Don't lower yourself—!

James [*over ANN'S shoulder*] The Colonel never came near us the other day till he saw a chance o' picking up the pieces—!

Stephen Nor Rose either—neither of them did!

James It's six o' one and half a dozen o' the other!

Rose [*to JAMES and STEPHEN*] Oh, you cads, you boys—!

James [*mockingly*] Didn't they bustle down to Linchpool in a hurry then! Ha, ha, ha!

Stephen [*waving his hand in PONTING'S face*] This serves you right, Colonel, this serves you right

Rose [*leading PONTING towards the door*] Don't notice them—don't notice them

James [*walking about on the left, 'to ANN*] I'm in a mess, mother, I'm in a dreadful mess!

Stephen [*sinking into a chair by the tea-table*] On I go at the broken-down rat-hole in King Street, on I go with my worn-out old plant

[*On getting to the door, PONTING discovers that ELKIN and VALLANCE have taken their departure. He returns, with ROSE, to the further side of the dining-table*]

Ann [*to JAMES*] You must get rid of your contract, James

James Who'll take it—who'll take it—!

Stephen I've always been behind the times—

*Louisa Nelly will laugh her teeth out of her head—*

*Ponting [to JAMES and STEPHEN, trying to attract their attention] Mortimore—Mortimore—*

*Ann [to JAMES] It's splendid land, isn't it?*

*James Nobody's been ass enough to touch it but me!*

*Stephen [rocking himself to and fro] Always behind the times—no need to tell me that—*

*Ponting [to JAMES] Mortimore—*

*James [to PONTING] What?*

*Ponting [pointing to the empty chairs] They've gone*

*James [sobbing down] Hooked it—*

*Stephen [looking round] Gone—?*

*James Elkin—*

*Stephen [weakly] And Vallance—*

*James They might have had the common civility—*

*Ponting [coming forward slowly and dejectedly] They've gone to that woman—*

*Rose [at the further side of the table] I hope they send her to jail—the trull—the baggage!*

*[ANN and LOUISA join ROSE]*

*Ponting The whole business will be settled between 'em in ten minutes—the whole business*

*James [coming to PONTING] Aye, the whole concern*

*Stephen [who has risen, holding his head] Oh, it's awful!*

*Ponting [laying a hand on JAMES and STEPHEN who are on either side of him] My friends, don't let us disagree—we're all in the same boat—*

*James [grimly, looking into space] Aye, they'll be talking it over nicely—*

*Ponting Let us stick to each other. Aren't we throwing up the sponge prematurely—?*

*James [not heeding him] Tad and his wife and the lawyers—ha, ha—!*

*Stephen And that girl—*

*James [nodding]. The young lady*

*Ponting What girl?*

*Stephen Miss Thornhill*

*Ponting Thornhill—?*

*James She's staying with 'em*

*Ponting She is!*

*Rose [coming forward on the left] Staying with the Tads—?*

*Ponting In their house! Elkin and Vallance will find her there!*

*James [nodding] Aye*

*Ponting [violently] It's a conspiracy—!*

*James Conspiracy—?*

*Ponting I see it! The Thornhill girl's in it!*

*[He goes to ROSE as ANN and LOUISA come forward on the left]*

*They're cheating us—they're cheating us! I tell you we ought to be present. They're robbing us behind our backs—*

*Stephen [looking at JAMES] Jim—?*

*James [shaking his head] No, it's no conspiracy—*

*Ponting It is! They're robbing us—!*

*Stephen [to JAMES] Still, I—I really think—*

*Ponting Behind our backs!*

*The Ladies Yes—yes—yes—*

*James [after a pause, quietly, stroking his beard] By George, we'll go down—!*

*[Instantly they all make for the door]*

*Stephen We'll be there as soon as Elkin—*

*Ponting A foul conspiracy—!*

*Ann [in the rear] Wait till I put on my hat—*

*Rose Jim, you follow with Ann*

*Ponting [to STEPHEN] We'll go on ahead*

*Stephen Yes, we'll go first*

*Louisa I'm ready*

*James No, no, we'll all go together*

*Ponting Robbing us behind our backs—!*

*James Look sharp, mother!*

*The Others Be quick—be quick—be quick!*

*[Seizing ANN and pushing her before them, they struggle through the doorway]*

## ACT FOUR

*Again, the drawing-room in the house of the THADDEUS MORTIMORES. VALLANCE is seated at the writing-table by the bay-window, reading aloud from a written paper. PHYLLIS, in deep abasement, is upon the settee by the piano, and THADDEUS is standing by her, holding her left hand in both of his. On the left of the table at the end of the piano sits HPLEN, pale, calm, and erect, and opposite to her, in the chair on the other side of the table, is ELKIN PONTING is sitting in the bay-window. STEPHEN is*

*standing upon the hearth-rug, and the rest of the "family" are seated about the room—all looking very humble and downcast ANN and LOUISA are upon the settee on the right, ROSE is in the armchair on the nearer side of the fireplace, JAMES on the ottoman ROSE, ANN, and LOUISA are in their outdoor things.*

Vallance [reading] "It was broad daylight before my husband and I got back to our lodgings. The document was then in a pocket I was wearing under my dress. Before going to bed I hid the pocket in a drawer. At about eleven o'clock on the same morning my husband took me to Roper's, the draper's, in Ford Street, and left me there. After my measurements were taken, I went up Ford Street and on to the bridge. I then tore up both the paper and the envelope and dropped the pieces into the water."

Elkin [half turning to PHYLLIS] You declare that that is correct in every particular, Mrs Mortimore?

[PHYLLIS bursts into a paroxysm of tears]

Thaddeus [to PHYLLIS, as if comforting a child] All right, dear, all right. I'm with you—I'm with you.

[She sobs helplessly]

Tell Mr Elkin—tell him—is that correct?

Phyllis [through her sobs] Yes.

Elkin [to PHYLLIS] You've nothing further to say?

[Her sobbing continues]

Thaddeus [to PHYLLIS] Have you anything more to say, dear? [Encouragingly, as she tries to speak] I'm here, dear—I'm with you. Is there anything—anything more?

Phyllis Only—only that I beg Miss Thornhill's pardon. I beg her pardon. Oh, I beg her pardon.

[ELKIN looks at HELEN, who, however, makes no response]

Thaddeus [to PHYLLIS, glancing at the others] And—and

Phyllis And—and Ann and Jim—and Stephen—and Lou—and Rose and Colonel Ponting—I beg their pardon—I beg their pardon. [She sinks back upon the settee, and her fit of weeping gradually exhausts itself]

Thaddeus And I—and I, Mr Elkin—I wish to offer my apologies—my humble

apologies—to you and Mr Vallance—and to everybody—for what took place this afternoon in my brother's dining-room.

Elkin [kindly] Perhaps it isn't necessary—

Thaddeus Perhaps not—but it's on my mind. [To ELKIN and VALLANCE] I assure you and Mr Vallance—[to the others] and I assure every member of my family—that when I went away from here I had no intention of inventing the story I attempted to tell you at "Ivanhoe." It came into my head suddenly—quite suddenly—on my way to Claybrook Road—almost at the gate of the house I must have been mad to think I could succeed in imposing on you all. I believe I was mad, gentlemen, and that's my excuse, and I—I hope you'll accept it.

Elkin Speaking for myself, I accept it freely.

Vallance And I.

Thaddeus Thank you—thank you.

[He looks at the others wistfully, but they are all staring at the carpet, and they, too, make no response. Then he seats himself beside PHYLLIS and again takes her hand]

Elkin [after a pause]. Well, Mr. Vallance

[VALLANCE rises, the written paper in his hand, and comes forward on the left]

I think—[glancing over his shoulder at PHYLLIS] I think that this lady makes it perfectly clear to any reasonable person that the document which she abstracted from the safe in Cannon Row, and subsequently destroyed, was the late Mr Edward Mortimore's will, and that Miss Thornhill was the universal legatee under it, and was named as the sole executrix.

[VALLANCE seats himself in the chair on the extreme left]

As I said in Mr James Mortimore's house, the advice I shall give to Miss Thornhill is that she applies to the Court for probate of the substance and effect of this will.

Vallance Upon an affidavit by Mrs Thaddeus Mortimore—?

Elkin An affidavit disclosing what she has done and verifying a statement of the contents of the will.

Vallance And how, may I ask, are you going to get over your great difficulty?

*Elkin* My great difficulty ?

*Vallance* The fact that Mrs Thaddeus Mortimore is unable to swear that the will was duly witnessed

*Ponting* Ah! [*Rising and coming forward, but discreetly keeping behind HELEN*] That seems to me to be insuperable—insuperable [*Anxiously*] Eh, Mr Vallance?

*Stephen* [*advancing a step or two*] An obstacle which cannot be got over

*Ponting* [*eyeing HELEN furtively*] It—ah—may appear rather ungracious to Miss Thornhill—a young lady we hold in the highest esteem—and to whom I express regret for any hasty word I may have used on arriving here—unreserved regret—

[*HELEN's eyes flash, and her shoulders contract, otherwise she makes no acknowledgment*]

it may appear ungracious to Miss Thornhill to discuss this point in her presence, [*pulling at his moustache*] but she will be the first to recognize that there are many—ah—interests at stake

*Stephen* Many interests—many interests—

*Ponting* And where so many interests are involved, one mustn't—ah—allow oneself to be swayed by anything like sentiment

*Stephen* [*at the round table*] In justice, one oughtn't to be sentimental

*Ponting* One daren't be sentimental

*Louisa* [*meekly, raising her head*] I always maintain—

*Stephen* [*to LOUISA*] Yes, yes, yes

*Louisa* There are two sides—

*Stephen* Yes, yes

*Elkin* [*ignoring the interruption*] Mrs Thaddeus Mortimore is prepared to swear, Mr Vallance, that she believes there were other signatures besides the signature of the late Mr Mortimore

*Vallance* But she has no recollection of the names of witnesses—

*Ponting* None whatever

*Stephen* Not the faintest

*Vallance* Nor as to whether there was an attestation clause at all

*Ponting* Her memory is an utter blank as to that

*Stephen* An utter blank

[*As PONTING and STEPHEN perk up, there is a rise in the spirits of the ladies at the fireplace ROSE twists her chair round to face the men JAMES doesn't stir*]

*Elkin* Notwithstanding that, I can't help considering it reasonably probable that, in the circumstances, the Court would presume the will to have been made in due form

*Ponting* [*walking about agitatedly*] I differ

*Stephen* [*walking about*] So do I

*Ponting* I don't pretend to a profound knowledge of the law—

*Stephen* As a mere layman, I consider it extremely improbable—extremely improbable

*Vallance* [*to STEPHEN and PONTING*] Well, gentlemen, there I am inclined to agree with you—

*Ponting* [*pulling himself up*] Ah!

*Stephen* [*returning to the round table*] Ah!

*Vallance* I think it doubtful whether, on the evidence of Mrs Thaddeus Mortimore, the will could be upheld

*Ponting* Exactly [*To everybody*] You've only to look at the thing in the light of common sense—

*Stephen* [*argumentatively, rapping the table*] A will exists or it does not exist—

*Ponting* If it ever existed, and has been destroyed—

*Stephen* It must be shown that it was a complete will—

*Ponting* Shown beyond dispute

*Stephen* Complete down to the smallest detail

*Vallance* [*continuing*] At the same time, in my opinion, the facts do not warrant the making of an affidavit that the late Mr Mortimore died intestate

*Ponting* [*stiffly*] Indeed?

*Stephen* [*depressed*] Really?

*Vallance* And the question of whether or not he left a duly executed will is clearly one for the Court to decide

*Elkin* Quite so—quite so

*Vallance* I advise, therefore, that, to get the question determined, the next-of-kin should consent to the course of procedure suggested by Mr Elkin

*Elkin* I am assuming their consent

*Ponting* [*blustering*] And supposing the next-of-kin do not consent, Mr Vallance—?

*Stephen* Supposing we do not consent—?

*Ponting* Supposing we are convinced—convinced—that the late Mr Mortimore

died without leaving a properly executed will?

*Elkin* Then the application, instead of being by motion to the judge in Court, must take the form of an action by writ [*To VALLANCE*] In any case, perhaps it should do so

[*There is a pause* STEPHEN wanders disconsolately to the window on the right and stands gazing into the garden PONTING leans his elbows on the piano and stares at vacancy]

*Elkin* [*to HELEN, looking at his watch*] Well, my dear Miss Thornhill ?

[*VALLANCE rises*]

*Helen* Wait—wait a moment

[*The sound of HELEN's voice turns everybody, except JAMES, THADDEUS, and PHYLLIS, in her direction*]

*Elkin* [*to HELEN*] Eh?

*Helen* Wait a moment, please There is something I want to be told—there's something I want to be told plainly

*Elkin* What?

*Helen* Mrs Thaddeus Mortimore . .

*Elkin* Yes?

*Helen* [*slowly*] I want to know whether it is necessary, whatever proceedings are taken on my behalf—whether it is necessary that she should be publicly disgraced I want to know that

*Elkin* Whichever course is adopted—motion to the judge or action by writ—Mrs Thaddeus Mortimore's act must be disclosed in open Court

*Helen* There are no means of avoiding it?

*Elkin* None

*Helen* And the offence she has committed is—felony, you say?

[*ELKIN inclines his head Again there is silence, during which HELEN sits with knitted brows, and then JAMES rouses himself and looks up*]

*James* [*to ELKIN*] What's the—what's the penalty?

*Elkin* [*turning to him*] The—the penalty?

*James* The legal punishment

*Elkin* I think—another occasion

[*Suddenly THADDEUS and PHYLLIS rise together, he with an arm round her, supporting her, and they stand side by side like criminals in the dock*]

*Thaddeus* [*quickly*] No, no—now .

*Phyllis* [*faintly*] Yes—now .

*Thaddeus* [*to ELKIN and VALLANCE*] We—we should like to know the worst, gentlemen I—I had the idea from the first that it was a serious offence—but hardly so serious

*Elkin* [*with a wave of the hand*] By and by

*Thaddeus* Oh, you needn't hesitate, Mr Elkin [*Drawing PHYLLIS closer to him*] We—we shall go through with it We shall go through with it to the end [*After a pause*] Imprisonment, sir?

*Elkin* [*gravely*] A person convicted of stealing or destroying a will for a fraudulent purpose is liable under the statute to varying terms of penal servitude, or to imprisonment with or without hard labor In this instance, we should be justified, I am sure, in hoping for a considerable amount of leniency

[*THADDEUS and PHYLLIS slowly look at one another with expressionless faces JAMES rises and moves away to the fireplace, where he stands looking down upon the flowers in the grate VALLANCE goes to the writing-table and puts the written paper into his bag ELKIN rises, takes up his bag from the table at the end of the piano, and is following VALLANCE As he passes HELEN, she lays her hand upon his arm*]

*Helen* Mr Elkin

*Elkin* [*stopping*] Yes?

*Helen* Oh, but this is impossible

*Elkin* Impossible?

*Helen* Quite impossible I couldn't be a party—please understand me—I refuse to be a party—to any steps which would bring ruin on Mrs Mortimore

*Elkin* [*politely*] You refuse ?

*Helen* Absolutely At any cost—at any cost to me—we must all unite in sparing her and her husband and children

*Elkin* My dear young lady, I join you heartily in your desire not to bring suffering upon innocent people But if you decline to take proceedings

*Helen* There is no "if" in the matter

*Elkin* If you decline to take proceedings, there is a deadlock

*Helen* A deadlock?

*Elkin* As Mr Vallance tells us, it's out of the question that the next-of-kin should now apply for Letters of Administration in the usual way



*Helen* Why? I don't see why—I can't see why

*Elkin* [pointing to JAMES and STEPHEN] You don't see why neither of these gentlemen can make an affidavit that Mr Edward Mortimore died intestate!

*Helen* [with a movement of the head towards PHYLIS] She has no remembrance of a—what is it called ?

*Ponting* [eagerly] Attestation clause

*Stephen* [coming to the head of the piano] Attestation clause

*Helen* [haughtily, without turning] Thank you [To ELKIN] Only the vaguest notion that there were witnesses

*Ponting* The vaguest notion

*Stephen* The haziest

*Elkin* Her memory is uncertain there [To HELEN] But you know—you know, Miss Thornhill—as we all know—that it was your father's will that was found in the safe at Cannon Row and destroyed

*Helen* [looking up at him, gripping the arms of her chair] Yes, of course I know it. Thank God I know it! I'm happy in knowing it. I know he didn't forget me, I know I was all to him that I imagined myself to be. And it's because I've come to know this at last—through her—that I can afford to be a little generous to her. Oh, please don't think that I want to introduce sentimentality into this affair—[with a contemptuous glance at PONTING and STEPHEN] any more than Colonel Ponting does—or Mr Stephen Mortimore. Mrs Thaddeus did a cruel thing when she destroyed that will. It's no excuse for her to say that she wasn't aware of my existence. She was defrauding some woman, and, as it happened—I own it now!—defrauding that woman, not only of money, but of what is more valuable than money—of peace of mind, contentment, belief in one who could never speak, never explain, never defend himself. However, she has made the best reparation it is in her power to make—and she has gone through a bad time—and I forgive her.

[PHYLIS releases herself from THADDEUS and drops down upon the settle. He sits upon the ottoman, burying his face in his hands. HELEN rises struggling to keep back her tears, and turns to the door.]

I—I'll go upstairs—if you'll allow me

*Elkin* [between her and the door] Miss

Thornhill, you put us in a position of great difficulty—

*Helen* [impatiently] I say again, I don't see why. Where is the difficulty? [To VALANCE and ELKIN] If there's a difficulty, it's you gentlemen who are raising it. Let the affair go on as it was going on. [Turning to JAMES] Mr Mortimore! [To ELKIN] I say, let Mr James Mortimore and the others administer the estate as they intended to do.

[JAMES has left the fireplace and slowly advanced to her. She addresses him.]  
Mr Mortimore—

*Elkin* [to HELEN] Then you would have Mr James Mortimore deliberately swear that he believes his late brother died without leaving a will?

*Helen* Certainly, if necessary. Who would be hurt by it?

*Elkin* [pursing his lips] Miss Thornhill—

*Helen* [hotly] Why, which do you think would be the more acceptable to the Almighty—that I should send this poor lady to prison, or that Mr James should take a false oath?

*Elkin* H'm! I won't attempt to follow you quite so far. But even then a most important point would remain to be settled.

*Helen* Even then .

*Elkin* Assuming that Mr James Mortimore did make this affidavit—that he were permitted to make such an affidavit . .

*Helen* Yes?

*Elkin* What about the disposition of the estate?

*Helen* [nodding, slowly and thoughtfully] The—the disposition of the estate.

[STEPHEN steals over to PONTING, and ROSE, ANN, and LOUISA quietly rise and gather together. They all listen with painful interest.]

*Elkin* [to HELEN] Morally, at all events, the whole of the late Mr Mortimore's estate belongs to you.

*Helen* [simply] It was his intention that it should do so. [Looking at JAMES, as if inviting him to speak.] Well ?

*James* [stroking his beard] Look here, Miss Thornhill. [Pointing to the chair on the extreme left.] Sit down a minute.

[She sits. JAMES also seats himself, facing her, at the right of the table at the end of the piano. VALANCE joins ELKIN, and they stand near HELEN.]



*occasionally exchanging remarks with each other]*

Look here [*In a deep, gruff voice*] There is no doubt that my brother Ned's money rightfully belongs to you

*Ponting* [*nervously*] Mortimore

*James* [*turning upon him*] You leave us alone Don't you interfere [*To HELEN*] I've no more doubt about it, Miss Thornhill, than that I'm sitting here Very good Say I make the affidavit, and that we—the family—obtain Letters of Administration What then? The money comes to us Still it's *yours* We get hold of it, but it's *yours* Now! What if we offer to throw the whole lot, so to speak, into your lap?

*Stephen* [*biting his nails*] Jim

*James* [*to STEPHEN*] Don't you interfere [*To HELEN*] I repeat, what if we offer to throw the whole lot into your lap? [*Leaning forward, very earnestly*] Miss Thornhill—

*Ponting* May I—?

*James* [*to PONTING*] If you can't be silent ! [*To HELEN*] Miss Thornhill, we're poor, we Mortimores I won't say anything about Rose—[*with a sneer*] it wouldn't be polite to the Colonel, nor Tad—you see what he's come to But Stephen and me—take our case [*To ELKIN and VALLANCE*] Mr Vallance—Mr Elkin—this is sacred [*To HELEN*] My dear, we're prominent men in the town, both of us, we're looked up to as being fairly warm and comfortable, but in reality we're not much better off than the others My trade's being cut into on all sides, Stephen's business has run to seed, we've no capital, we've never had any capital What we might have saved has been spent on educating our children, and keeping up appearances, and when the time comes for us to be knocked out, there'll be precious little—bar a stroke of luck—precious little for us to end our days on So this is a terrible disappointment to us—an awful disappointment Aye, the money's yours—it's yours—but—[*opening his hands*] what are you going to do for the family?

[*There is a pause The PONTINGS, STEPHEN, ANN, and LOUISA draw a little nearer*]

*Helen* [*to JAMES*] Well—since you put it in this way—I'll tell you what I'll do [*After a pause*] I'll share with you all

*James* [*to the others*] You leave us alone, you leave us alone [*To HELEN*] Share and share alike?

*Helen* [*thinking*] Share and share alike—after discharging my obligations

*James* Obligations?

*Ponting* and *Stephen* Obligations?

*Helen* After carrying out my father's instructions with regard to his old servants

*James* [*nodding*] Oh, aye

*Ponting* [*walking about excitedly*] That's a small matter

*Stephen* [*also walking about*]. A trifle—a trifle—

*Ponting* Then what it amounts to is this—the estate will be divided into five parts instead of four

*Stephen* Five instead of four—obviously

*Helen* [*still thinking*] No—into six

*James* Six?

*Ponting* and *Stephen* Six!

[*ROSE and LOUISA, with ANN, are moving round the head of the piano, to join PONTING and STEPHEN*]

*Rose* and *Louisa* Six!

*Helen* [*firmly*] Six A share must be given, as a memorial of my father, to one of the hospitals in Linchpool

*Ponting* and *Stephen* [*protestingly*] Oh . . . !

*Rose, Ann, and Louisa* Oh . . . !

*Ponting* Entirely unnecessary

*Stephen* Uncalled for

*Helen* I insist

*Ponting* [*coming to HELEN*] My dear Miss Thornhill, believe me—believe me—these cadging hospitals are a great deal too well off as it is

*Helen* I insist that a share shall be given to a Linchpool hospital

*Ponting* I could furnish you with details of maladministration on the part of hospital-boards—

*Rose* Shocking mismanagement—

*Stephen* There's our own hospital—

*Louisa* A scandal

*Stephen* Our Jubilee hospital—

*Ann* It's scarcely fit to send your servants to

*Helen* [*to JAMES, rising*] Mr Mortimore

*James* [*rising, to PONTING and the rest*] Miss Thornhill says that one share of the estate's to go to a Linchpool hospital D'ye hear? [*Moving towards them authoritatively*] That's enough.

[PONTING and STEPHEN bustle to the writing-table, where they each seize a sheet of paper and proceed to reckon ROSE, ANN, and LOUISA surround them JAMES stands by, his hands in his pockets, looking on]

Ponting [sitting at the writing-table—in an undertone] A hundred and seventy thousand pounds .

Stephen [bending over the table—in an undertone] Six into seventeen—two and carry five

Ponting Six into fifty—eight and carry two

Stephen Six into twenty

Ponting Three

[HELEN seats herself in the chair on the right of the table at the end of the piano ELKIN and VALLANCE are now in earnest conversation on the extreme left While the calculation is going on, THADDEUS and PHYLLIS raise their heads and look at each other]

Stephen Carry two

Ponting Six into twenty again—three and carry two .

Stephen Again, six into twenty—three and carry two

Ponting Six into forty—six and carry four

Stephen Six into forty-eight

Ponting Eight

Stephen Twenty-eight thousand, three hundred and thirty-three pounds, six shilling and eight pence

Ponting [rising, his paper in his hand] Twenty-eight thousand apiece

Thaddeus [rising] No!

Phyllis [rising] No!

Thaddeus [as everybody turns to him] No, no—

James Eh?

Ponting [to THADDEUS] What do you mean, sir?

Stephen [to THADDEUS] What do you mean?

Thaddeus [agitatedly] I don't take my share—my wife and I don't take our share—we don't touch it—

Phyllis [clinging to THADDEUS] We won't touch it—oh, no, no, no, no—!

James [to THADDEUS] Don't be a fool—don't be a fool!

Thaddeus Fool or no fool—not a penny—

Phyllis Not a penny of it—

Thaddeus Not a penny

Helen Very well, then [In a clear voice] Very well, Mr Thaddeus Mortimore will not accept his share

Ponting [with alacrity] He declines it

Helen He declines it.

Ponting That alters the figures—alters the figures—

Stephen Very materially

Rose [to ANN and LOUISA] Only five to share instead of six

Ann [bewildered] I don't understand

Louisa [shaking her arm] Five instead of six!

[Laying his paper on the top of the piano, PONTING produces his pocket-pencil and makes a fresh calculation

STEPHEN stands at his elbow ROSE, ANN, and LOUISA gather round them]

Stephen [in an undertone] A hundred and seventy thousand

Ponting [in an undertone] Five into seventeen

Stephen Three

Ponting Five into twenty

Stephen Thirty-four thousand exactly

Ponting Thirty-four thousand apiece

Rose, Ann, and Louisa [to each other] Thirty-four thousand!

Helen Wait—wait Wait, please [After a short pause] Mr Thaddeus Mortimore refuses to accept his share I am sorry—but he appears determined

Thaddeus Determined—determined

Phyllis Determined

Helen That being so, I ask that his share shall be settled upon his boy and girl [To ELKIN] Mr Elkin

[ELKIN advances to her] I suppose an arrangement of that kind can easily be made?

Elkin [with a shrug] Mr Thaddeus Mortimore can assent to his share being handed over to the trustees of a Deed of Settlement for the benefit of his children, giving a release to the administrator from all claims in respect of his share

Helen [turning to THADDEUS] You've no objection to this?

[THADDEUS and PHYLLIS stare at HELEN dumbly, with parted lips]

They're great friends of mine—Cyril and Joyce—and I hope they'll remain so

[There is a pause] Well? You've no right to stand in their light

[There is a pause] You won't, surely, stand in their light?

[*There is a pause*]

Don't

[*Again there is silence, and then PHYLLIS, leaving THADDEUS, totters forward, and drops on her knees before HELEN, bowing her head in HELEN'S lap*]

Phyllis [*weeping*] Oh-oh-oh . . . !

[*Calmly, HELEN disengages herself from PHYLLIS, rises, and walks away to the fireplace THADDEUS lifts PHYLLIS from the ground and leads her to the open window They stand there, facing the garden, she crying upon his shoulder*]

Elkin [*advancing to the middle of the room, with the air of a man who is about to perform an unpleasant task*] Miss Thornhill . . .

[*HELEN turns to him*]

Mr Vallance and I— [*To VALLANCE*] Mr Vallance . . .

[*VALLANCE advances*]

Mr Vallance and I have come to the conclusion that, as all persons interested in this business are *suu juris* and agreeable to the compromise which has been proposed, nobody would be injured by the next-of-kin applying for Letters of Administration

Vallance [*to ELKIN*]. Except the Revenue

Elkin [*indifferently, with a nod*]. The Revenue

Vallance The legacy duty being at three per cent instead of ten

Elkin [*nodding*] H'm, h'm! [*To HELEN*] But, my dear young lady, we have also to say that, with the information we possess, we do not see our way clear to act in the matter any further

[*JAMES comes forward on the left*]

Vallance [*to JAMES*] We certainly could not be parties to the making of an affidavit that the deceased died intestate

Elkin We couldn't reconcile ourselves to that

Vallance. We leave it, therefore, to the next-of-kin to take their own course for obtaining Letters of Administration

Elkin In fact, we beg to be allowed to withdraw from the affair altogether I speak for myself, at any rate

Vallance [*emphatically*] Altogether

James [*after a pause*] Oh—all right, Mr Elkin, all right, Mr Vallance

Helen [*to ELKIN*] Then do I lose you . . . ?

Elkin I am afraid—for the present . . .

Helen [*with dignity*] As you please. I am very grateful to you for what you have done for me

Elkin [*looking round*] If I may offer a last word of advice, it is that you should avoid putting the terms of this compromise into writing

Vallance [*assentingly*] Each party must rely upon the other to fulfil the terms honorably.

Elkin [*to HELEN*] You have no legal right to enforce those terms, but pray remember that, in the event of any breach of faith, there would be nothing to prevent you propounding the will even after Letters of Administration have been granted

James Breach of faith, sir . . . !

Ponting and Stephen [*indignantly*]. Oh—!

James There's no need, Mr. Elkin—

Elkin [*to JAMES*]. No, no, no—not the slightest, I'm convinced [*To HELEN, taking her hand*] The little hotel in London—Norfolk Street—?

Helen Till I'm suited with lodgings

Elkin Mrs Elkin will write

Helen My love to her.

[*He smiles at her and leaves her, as*

VALLANCE comes to her and shakes her hand]

Vallance [*to HELEN*] Good-bye

Helen [*to VALLANCE*] Good-bye

Elkin [*to those on the left*] Good afternoon

A Murmur Good afternoon

Vallance [*to those on the left*]. Good afternoon

A Murmur Good afternoon

[*JAMES has opened the door ELKIN and VALLANCE, carrying their bags, go out JAMES follows them, closing the door*]

Ponting [*coming forward*] Ha! We can replace those gentlemen without much difficulty

Stephen [*coming forward*] Old Crake has gone to pieces and this fellow Vallance is playing ducks and drakes with the practice—ducks and drakes

[*PONTING offers his hand to HELEN, who takes it perfunctorily*]

Ponting Greatly indebted to you—greatly indebted to you for meeting us half-way and saving unpleasantness

Stephen Pratt is the best lawyer in the town—the best by far

*Ponting* [to HELEN] Nothing like a compromise, provided it can be arrived at—ah—

*Stephen* Without loss of self-respect on both sides [JAMES returns]

*Ponting* [to JAMES] Mortimore, we'll go back to your house There are two or three things to talk over

[ROSE comes to HELEN as PONTING goes to STEPHEN and JAMES]

*Rose* [shaking hands with HELEN] We sha'n't be settled in Carlos Place till the autumn, but directly we are settled . . .

*Helen* [distantly] Thank you

*Rose* Everybody flocks to my Tuesdays Let me have your address, and I'll send you a card

[ROSE leaves HELEN, making way for LOUISA and STEPHEN]

*Louisa* [to HELEN] Don't forget the Crescent Whenever you want to visit your dear father's birthplace—

*Stephen* [benevolently] And if there should be any little ceremony over laying the foundation-stone of the new *Times and Mirror* building—

*Louisa* There's the spare bedroom

[They shake hands with her and, making way for ANN and JAMES, follow the PONTINGS, who have gone out]

*Ann* [shaking hands with HELEN, gloomily] The next time you stay at "Ivanhoe," I hope you'll unpack more than one small trunk But, there—[kissing her] I bear no malice [She follows the others, leaving JAMES with HELEN]

*James* [to HELEN, gruffly, wringing her hand] Much obliged to you, my dear, much obliged to you

*Helen* [after glancing over her shoulder, in a whisper] Mr Mortimore .

*James* Eh?

*Helen* [with a motion of her head in the direction of THADDEUS and PHYLLIS] These two—these two

*James* [lowering his voice] What about 'em?

*Helen* She's done a wrong thing, but recollect—you all profit by it You don't disdain, any of you, to profit by it

[He looks at her queerly, but straight in the eyes]

Try to make their lives a little easier for them

*James* Easier ?

*Helen* Happier You can influence the others, if you will [After a pause] Will you?

[He reflects, shakes her hand again, and goes to the door]

*James* [at the door, sharply] Tad !

[THADDEUS turns]

See you in the morning *Phyllis* . !

[She also turns to him, half scared at his tone]

See you both in the morning [Nodding to her] Good-bye, old girl

[He disappears HELEN is now standing upon the hearth-rug, her hands behind her, looking down into the grate THADDEUS and PHYLLIS glance at her, then, guiltily, they too move to the door, passing round the head of the piano]

*Phyllis* [at the door in a low, hard voice]

*Helen* . [HELEN partly turns]

You're leaving to-morrow I'll keep out of your way—I'll keep up-stairs to my room—till you've gone

[She goes out THADDEUS is following her, when HELEN calls to him]

*Helen* Mr Thaddeus .

[He closes the door and advances to her humbly She comes forward]

There's no reason why I should put your wife to that trouble It's equally convenient to me to return to London this evening

[He bows]

Will you kindly ask Kate to pack me?

*Thaddeus* Certainly

*Helen* Er—[thinking] Mr Trist had some calls to make after we left the flower-show If I've gone before he comes back, tell him I'll write

*Thaddeus* [bowing again] You'll write *Helen* And explain

*Thaddeus* [under his breath, looking up quickly] Explain !

*Helen* Explain, among other things, that I've yielded to the desire of the family—

*Thaddeus* Desire ?

*Helen* That I should accept a share of my father's property

*Thaddeus* [falteringly] Thank you—thank you

*Helen* [after a while] That's all, I think

*Thaddeus* [offering his hand to her] I—I wish you every happiness, Miss Thornhill

[She places her hand in his]

I—I wish you every happiness

[She inclines her head in acknowledgment, and again he goes to the door, and again, turning away to the round

*table where she trifles with a book, she calls him]*

Helen Oh, Mr Tad [He halts]  
Mr Tad, I propose that we allow six months to pass in complete silence—six months from to-day

Thaddeus [*dully, not understanding*] Six months—silence ?

Helen I mean, without my hearing from your wife Then, perhaps, she—she will send me another invitation

Thaddeus [*leaving the door, staring at her*] Invitation ?

Helen By that time, we shall, all of us, have forgotten a great deal—sha'n't we? [*Facing him*] You'll say that to her for me?

[*He hesitates, then he takes her hands and, bending over them, kisses them repeatedly*]

Thaddeus God bless you God bless you God bless you

Helen [*withdrawing her hands*] Find—Kate

[*Once more he makes for the door*]

Thaddeus [*stopping half-way and pulling himself together*] Miss Thornhill—my wife—my wife—you've seen her at a disadvantage—a terrible disadvantage Few—few pass through life without being seen—once—or oftener—at a disadvantage She—she's a splendid woman—a splendid woman—a splendid wife and mother [*Moving to the door*] They haven't appreciated her—the family haven't appreciated her They've treated her abominably, for sixteen years she's been treated abominably [*At the door*] But I've never regretted my marriage—[*defiantly*] I've never regretted it—never, for a single moment—never regretted it—never—never regretted it

[*He disappears She goes to the table at the end of the piano and takes up her drawing-block and box of crayons As she does so, TRIST lets himself into the garden She pauses, listening, and*

*presently he enters the room at the open window*]

Trist [*throwing his hat on the round table*] Ah . . !

Helen [*animatedly*] Mr Trist

Trist Yes?

Helen Run out to the post-office for me—send a telegram in my name .

Trist With pleasure

Helen Gregory's Hotel, Norfolk Street, Strand, London—the manager Miss Thornhill will arrive to-night—prepare her room—

Trist [*his face falling*] To-night!

Helen I've altered my plans Gregory's Hotel—Gregory's—

Trist [*picking up his hat*] Norfolk Street, Strand

Helen [*at the door*] Mr Trist—I want you to know—I—I've come into a small fortune

Trist A fortune . . ?

Helen Nearly thirty thousand pounds

Trist Thirty thousand . . !

Helen They've persuaded me—persuaded me to take a share of my poor father's money

Trist I—I'm glad

Helen You—you think I'm doing rightly?

Trist [*depressed*] Why—of course

[*She opens the door, and he goes to the window*]

Helen Mr Trist ! [*She comes back into the room*] Mr Trist . . !

[*He approaches her*]

Mr Trist—don't—don't .

Trist What?

Helen [*her head drooping*] Don't let this make any difference between us—will you ?

[*She raises her eyes to his, and they stand looking at each other in silence Then she turns away abruptly and leaves the room as he hurries through the garden*]

THE END

# LILIOM

By FERENC MOLNAR

*Translated from the Hungarian by BENJAMIN F GLAZER*

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## FERENC MOLNAR AND HIS PLAYS

FERENC MOLNAR, the most celebrated writer of contemporary Hungary, and the author of *Lilom*, was born in Budapest in 1879. While still in his teens he became a journalist and quickly gained fame through his clever stories and sketches. His reputation in Hungary is based upon his stories and novels as well as his plays, but he is chiefly known to the outside world as a dramatist. He has written over twenty plays of different types, many of which have been produced with success in America. Among these are not only *Lilom* but *The Devil*, *The Swan*, *The Guardsman*, and *The Play's the Thing*.

Molnar's range is remarkable, not only in subject-matter but in method and in tone. His lighter plays resemble those of Schnitzler—farce-comedies such as *The Play's the Thing* and *The Guardsman*, and comedies of manners, such as *The Swan*—plays of light and clever satire and often of brilliant dialogue. Again, like Schnitzler, he often sounds a deeper note, one of real pathos and sincere sentiment, as in *Lilom*, for Molnar is not only a satirist but a poet. His dramaturgy is strikingly original and often daring, for he has no more regard for the conventions of playmaking than he has for those of organized society. An American is likely to regard him as typically mid-European in his entire attitude toward life and in his scheme of values—and to feel refreshed and delighted or depressed and shocked, according to temperament.

Of all Molnar's plays *Lilom* ("The Lily") has made the widest appeal to the public and thus far is assuredly his masterpiece. Much discussed, often regarded as puzzling, it is really perfectly simple in essence, for it is essentially a love story, illustrating two very diverse characters, is intended only as such, and presents no subtle teaching and no special philosophy. Certainly, contrary to what seems the general opinion, it essays no theory of the after-life. Its amusing excursus into the supernatural is a purely fanciful touch that justifies itself simply by its own charm, whether or not it be essential to the play. Human character and passion, love and hate and crime, faithfulness and the sweetness of memory—these are surely sufficiently substantial and earthly and universal elements, when treated with originality and distinction, to give beauty and significance to any play—and these elements *Lilom* possesses in abundance.

*Lilom* was written in 1909 and was produced first in December of that year in Budapest. Its first production in English was in London in September, 1920, under the title of *The Daisy*, where it was again produced in December, 1926, as *Lilom*. In the meantime, its first production in America had taken place in April, 1920, in New York by The Theatre Guild. In June, 1923, it was produced in Paris. Its success wherever produced was immediate, and through repeated productions in various countries it has become one of the best known of contemporary plays. In 1945 it was successfully converted into the musical play *Carousel* by Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein, II.



## CHARACTERS

LILIOM  
JULIE  
MARIE  
MRS MUSKAT  
LOUISE  
MRS HOLLUNDER  
FICSUR  
YOUNG HOLLUNDER  
WOLF BEIFELD  
THE CARPENTER  
LINZMAN  
THE DOCTOR  
THE MAGISTRATE  
TWO MOUNTED POLICEMEN  
TWO PLAINCLOTHES POLICEMEN  
TWO HEAVENLY POLICEMEN  
THE RICHLY DRESSED MAN  
THE POORLY DRESSED MAN  
THE GUARD  
A SUBURBAN POLICEMAN

*The action takes place in Budapest at the present day*

# LILIOM

## THE PROLOGUE

An amusement park on the outskirts of Budapest on a late afternoon in Spring Barkers stand before the booths of the side-shows haranguing the passing crowd The strident music of a callope is heard, laughter, shouts, the scuffle of feet, the signal bells of a merry-go-round

The merry-go-round is at Center LILIOM stands at the entrance, a cigarette in his mouth, coaxing the people in The girls regard him with idolizing glances and screech with pleasure as he playfully pushes them through entrance Now and then some girl's escort resents the familiarity, whereupon LILIOM's demeanor becomes ugly and menacing, and the cowed escort slinks through the entrance behind his girl or contents himself with a muttered resentful comment

One girl hands LILIOM a red carnation, he rewards her with a bow and a smile When the soldier who accompanies her protests, LILIOM cows him with a fierce glance and a threatening gesture MARIE and JULIE come out of the crowd, and LILIOM favors them with particular notice as they pass into the merry-go-round

MRS MUSKAT comes out of the merry-go-round, bringing LILIOM coffee and rolls LILIOM mounts the barker's stand at the entrance, where he is elevated over everyone on the stage Here he begins his harangue Everybody turns toward him The other booths are gradually deserted The tumult makes it impossible for the audience to hear what he is saying, but every now and then some witicism of his provokes a storm of laughter which is audible above the din Many people enter the merry-go-round Here and there one catches a phrase "Room for one more on the zebra's back," "Which of you ladies?", "Ten heller for adults, five for children," "Step right up"

It is growing darker A lamplighter crosses the stage, and begins unperturbedly lighting the colored gas-lamps The whistle of a distant locomotive is heard Suddenly

*the tumult ceases, the lights go out, and the curtain falls in darkness*

## SCENE ONE

SCENE—A lonely place in the park, half hidden by trees and shrubbery Under a flowering acacia tree stands a painted wooden bench From the distance, faintly, comes the tumult of the amusement park It is the sunset of the same day

When the curtain rises the stage is empty

MARIE enters quickly, pauses at center, and looks back

Marie Julie, Julie! [There is no answer] Do you hear me, Julie? Let her be! Come on Let her be [Starts to go back] [JULIE enters, looks back angrily]

Julie Did you ever hear of such a thing? What's the matter with the woman anyway?

Marie [Looking back again] Here she comes again

Julie Let her come I didn't do anything to her All of a sudden she comes up to me and begins to raise a row

Marie Here she is Come on, let's run [Tries to urge her off]

Julie Run? I should say not What would I want to run for? I'm not afraid of her

Marie Oh, come on She'll only start a fight

Julie I'm going to stay right here Let her start a fight

Mrs Muskat [Entering] What do you want to run away for? [To JULIE] Don't worry I won't eat you But there's one thing I want to tell you, my dear Don't let me catch you in my carousel again I stand for a whole lot, I have to in my business It makes no difference to me whether my customers are ladies or the likes of you—as long as they pay their money But when a girl misbehaves herself on my carousel—out she goes Do you understand?

Julie Are you talking to me?

Mrs Muskat Yes, you! You—chambermaid, you! In my carousel—

*Julie* Who did anything in your old carousel? I paid my fare and took my seat and never said a word, except to my friend here

*Marie* No, she never opened her mouth Lihom came over to her of his own accord

*Mrs Muskat* It's all the same I'm not going to get in trouble with the police, and lose my license on account of you—you shabby kitchen maid!

*Julie* Shabby yourself

*Mrs Muskat* You stay out of my carousel! Letting my barker fool with you! Aren't you ashamed of yourself?

*Julie* What? What did you say?

*Mrs Muskat* I suppose you think I have no eyes in my head I see everything that goes on in my carousel During the whole ride she let Lihom fool with her—the shameless hussy!

*Julie* He did not fool with me! I don't let any man fool with me!

*Mrs Muskat* He leaned against you all through the ride!

*Julie* He leaned against the panther. He always leans against something, doesn't he? Everybody leans where he wants I couldn't tell him not to lean, if he always leans, could I? But he didn't lay a hand on me

*Mrs Muskat* Oh, didn't he? And I suppose he didn't put his hand around your waist, either?

*Marie* And if he did? What of it?

*Mrs Muskat* You hold your tongue! No one's asking you—just you keep out of it

*Julie* He put his arm around my waist—just the same as he does to all the girls He always does that

*Mrs Muskat* I'll teach him not to do it any more, my dear No carryings on in my carousel! If you are looking for that sort of thing, you'd better go to the circus! You'll find lots of soldiers there to carry on with!

*Julie.* You keep your soldiers for yourself!

*Marie* Soldiers! As if we wanted soldiers!

*Mrs Muskat* Well, I only want to tell you this, my dear, so that we understand each other perfectly If you ever stick your nose in my carousel again, you'll wish you hadn't! I'm not going to lose my license on account of the likes of you! People who

don't know how to behave, have got to stay out!

*Julie* You're wasting your breath If I feel like riding on your carousel I'll pay my ten heller and I'll ride I'd like to see anyone try to stop me!

*Mrs Muskat* Just come and try it, my dear—just come and try it

*Marie* We'll see what'll happen

*Mrs Muskat* Yes, you will see something happen that never happened before in this park

*Julie* Perhaps you think you could throw me out!

*Mrs Muskat.* I'm sure of it, my dear

*Julie* And suppose I'm stronger than you?

*Mrs Muskat* I'd think twice before I'd dirty my hands on a common servant girl I'll have Lihom throw you out He knows how to handle your kind

*Julie* You think Lihom would throw me out

*Mrs Muskat* Yes, my dear, so fast that you won't know what happened to you!

*Julie* He'd throw me— [Stops suddenly, for MRS MUSKAT has turned away Both look off stage until LIHOM enters, surrounded by four giggling servant girls]

*Lihom* Go away! Stop following me, or I'll smack your face!

*A Little Servant Girl* Well, give me back my handkerchief

*Lihom* Go on now—

*The Four Servant Girls* [Simultaneously] What do you think of him?—My handkerchief!—Give it back to her!—That's a nice thing to do!

*The Little Servant Girl* [To MRS. MUSKAT] Please, lady, make him—

*Mrs Muskat* Oh, shut up!

*Lihom* Will you get out of here? [Makes a threatening gesture—the four servant girls exit in voluble but fearful haste]

*Mrs Muskat* What have you been doing now?

*Lihom* None of your business [Glances at JULIE] Have you been starting with her again?

*Julie* Mister Lihom, please—

*Lihom* [Steps threateningly toward her] Don't yell!

*Julie* [Timidly] I didn't yell

*Lihom.* Well, don't [To MRS MUSKAT]

What's the matter? What has she done to you?

*Mrs Muskat* What has she done? She's been impudent to me Just as impudent as she could be! I put her out of the carousel Take a good look at this innocent thing, Liliom She's never to be allowed in my carousel again!

*Liliom* [To JULIE] You heard that Run home, now

*Marie* Come on Don't waste your time with such people [Tries to lead JULIE away]

*Julie* No, I won't—

*Mrs Muskat* If she ever comes again, you're not to let her in And if she gets in before you see her, throw her out Understand?

*Liliom* What has she done, anyhow?

*Julie* [Agitated and very earnest] Mister Liliom—tell me please—honest and truly—if I come into the carousel, will you throw me out?

*Mrs Muskat* Of course he'll throw you out

*Marie* She wasn't talking to you

*Julie* Tell me straight to my face, Mister Liliom, would you throw me out? [They face each other There is a brief pause]

*Liliom* Yes, little girl, if there was a reason—but if there was no reason, why should I throw you out?

*Marie* [To MRS MUSKAT] There, you see!

*Julie* Thank you, Mister Liliom

*Mrs Muskat* And I tell you again, if this little slut dares to set her foot in my carousel, she's to be thrown out! I'll stand for no indecency in my establishment

*Liliom* What do you mean—indecency?

*Mrs Muskat* I saw it all There's no use denying it

*Julie* She says you put your arm around my waist

*Liliom* Me?

*Mrs Muskat* Yes, you! I saw you Don't play the innocent

*Liliom* Here's something new! I'm not to put my arm around a girl's waist any more! I suppose I'm to ask your permission before I touch another girl!

*Mrs Muskat* You can touch as many girls as you want and as often as you want—for my part you can go as far as you like with any of them—but not this one—I per-

mit no indecency in my carousel [There is a long pause]

*Liliom* [To MRS MUSKAT] And now I'll ask you please to shut your mouth

*Mrs Muskat* What?

*Liliom* Shut your mouth quick, and go back to your carousel

*Mrs Muskat* What?

*Liliom* What did she do to you, anyhow? Tryin' to start a fight with a little pigeon like that just because I touched her?

—You come to the carousel as often as you want to, little girl Come every afternoon, and sit on the panther's back, and if you haven't got the price, Liliom will pay for you And if anyone dares to bother you, you come and tell me

*Mrs Muskat* You reprobate!

*Liliom* Old witch!

*Julie* Thank you, Mister Liliom

*Mrs Muskat* You seem to think that I can't throw you out, too What's the reason I can't? Because you are the best barker in the park? Well, you are very much mistaken In fact, you can consider yourself thrown out already You're discharged!

*Liliom* Very good

*Mrs Muskat* [Weakening a little] I can discharge you any time I feel like it

*Liliom* Very good, you feel like discharging me I'm discharged That settles it

*Mrs Muskat* Playing the high and mighty, are you? Conceited pig! Good-for-nothing!

*Liliom* You said you'd throw me out, didn't you? Well, that suits me, I'm thrown out

*Mrs Muskat* [Softening] Do you have to take up every word I say?

*Liliom* It's all right, it's all settled I'm a good-for-nothing And a conceited pig And I'm discharged

*Mrs Muskat* Do you want to run my business?

*Liliom* A good-for-nothing? Now I know! And I'm discharged! Very good

*Mrs Muskat* You're a devil, you are and that woman—

*Liliom* Keep away from her!

*Mrs Muskat* I'll get Hollinger to give you such a beating that you'll hear all the angels sing . . . and it won't be the first time, either.

*Lilom* Get out of here. I'm discharged  
And you get out of here

*Julie* [*Timidly*] Mister Lilom, if she's  
willing to say that she hasn't discharged  
you—

*Lilom* You keep out of this

*Julie* [*Timidly*] I don't want this to  
happen on account of me

*Lilom* [*To Mrs MUSKAT, pointing to  
JULIE*] Apologize to her!

*Marie* A-ha!

*Mrs Muskat* Apologize? To whom?

*Lilom* To this little pigeon. Well—are  
you going to do it?

*Mrs Muskat* If you give me this whole  
park on a silver plate, and all the gold of  
the Rothschilds on top of it—I'd—I'd—  
Let her dare to come into my carousel again  
and she'll get thrown out so hard that she'll  
see stars in daylight!

*Lilom* In that case, dear lady [*takes off  
his cap with a flourish*], you are respect-  
fully requested to get out o' here as fast as  
your legs will carry you—I never beat up a  
woman yet—except that Holzer woman who  
I sent to the hospital for three weeks—but  
—if you don't get out o' here this minute,  
and let this little squab be, I'll give you  
the prettiest slap in the jaw you ever had  
in your life

*Mrs Muskat* Very good, my son Now  
you can go to the devil Good-bye You're  
discharged, and you needn't try to come  
back, either [*She exits It is beginning to  
grow dark*]

*Marie* [*With grave concern*] Mister  
Lilom—

*Lilom* Don't you pity me or I'll give  
you a slap in the jaw [*To JULIE*] And  
don't you pity me, either

*Julie* [*In alarm*] I don't pity you,  
Mister Lilom

*Lilom* You're a liar, you are pitying me  
I can see it in your face You're thinking,  
now that Madame Muskat has thrown him  
out, Lilom will have to go begging Huh!  
Look at me I'm big enough to get along  
without a Madame Muskat I have been  
thrown out of better jobs than hers

*Julie* What will you do now, Mister  
Lilom?

*Lilom* Now? First of all, I'll go and  
get myself—a glass of beer You see, when  
something happens to annoy me, I always  
drink a glass of beer.

*Julie* Then you are annoyed about los-  
ing your job

*Lilom* No, only about where I'm going  
to get the beer

*Marie* Well—eh—

*Lilom* Well—eh—what?

*Marie* Well—eh—are you going to stay  
with us, Mister Lilom?

*Lilom* Will you pay for the beer?  
[*MARIE looks doubtful, he turns to JULIE*]  
Will you? [*She does not answer*] How  
much money have you got?

*Julie* [*Bashfully*] Eight heller

*Lilom* And you? [*MARIE casts down her  
eyes and does not reply LILLOM continues  
sternly*] I asked you how much you've  
got? [*MARIE begins to weep softly*] I  
understand Well, you needn't cry about  
it You girls stay here, while I go back to  
the carousel and get my clothes and things  
And when I come back, we'll go to the  
Hungarian beer-garden It's all right, I'll  
pay Keep your money [*He exits MARIE  
and JULIE stand silent, watching him until  
he has gone*]

*Marie* Are you sorry for him?

*Julie* Are you?

*Marie* Yes, a little Why are you look-  
ing after him in that funny way?

*Julie* [*Sits down*] Nothing—except I'm  
sorry he lost his job

*Marie* [*With a touch of pride*] It was  
on our account he lost his job Because  
he's fallen in love with you

*Julie* He hasn't at all

*Marie* [*Confidently*] Oh, yes! he is in  
love with you [*Hesitantly, romantically*]  
There is someone in love with me, too

*Julie* There is? Who?

*Marie* I—I never mentioned it before,  
because you hadn't a lover of your own—  
but now you have—and I'm free to speak  
[*Very grandiloquently*] My heart has  
found its mate

*Julie* You're only making it up

*Marie* No, it's true—my heart's true  
love—

*Julie* Who? Who is he?

*Marie* A soldier

*Julie* What kind of a soldier?

*Marie* I don't know Just a soldier  
Are there different kinds?

*Julie* Many different kinds There are  
hussars, artillerymen, engineers, infantry—  
that's the kind that walks—and—

Marie How can you tell which is which?

Julie By their uniforms

Marie [After trying to puzzle it out] The conductors on the street cars—are they soldiers?

Julie Certainly not They're conductors

Marie Well, they have uniforms

Julie But they don't carry swords or guns

Marie Oh! [Thinks it over again, then] Well, policemen—are they?

Julie [With a touch of exasperation.] Are they what?

Marie Soldiers

Julie Certainly not. They're just policemen

Marie [Triumphantly] But they have uniforms—and they carry weapons, too

Julie You're just as dumb as you can be You don't go by their uniforms

Marie But you said—

Julie No, I didn't A letter-carrier wears a uniform, too, but that doesn't make him a soldier

Marie But if he carried a gun or a sword, would he be—

Julie No, he'd still be a letter-carrier You can't go by guns or swords, either

Marie Well, if you don't go by uniforms or the weapons, what do you go by?

Julie By— [Tries to put it into words, fails, then breaks off suddenly] Oh, you'll get to know when you've lived in the city long enough You're nothing but a country girl When you've lived in the city a year, like I have, you'll know all about it

Marie [Half angrily] Well, how do you know when you see a real soldier?

Julie By one thing.

Marie What?

Julie One thing— [She pauses MARIE starts to cry] Oh, what are you crying about?

Marie Because you're making fun of me You're a city girl, and I'm just fresh from the country and how am I expected to know a soldier when I see one? You, you ought to tell me, instead of making fun of me—

Julie All right Listen then, cry-baby There's only one way to tell a soldier by his salute! That's the only way

Marie [Joyfully, with a sigh of relief] Ah—that's good

Julie What?

Marie I say—it's all right then—because Wolf—Wolf— [JULIE laughs derisively] Wolf—that's his name [She weeps again]

Julie Crying again? What now?

Marie You're making fun of me again

Julie I'm not But when you say, "Wolf—Wolf—" like that, I have to laugh, don't I? [Archly] What's his name again?

Marie I won't tell you

Julie All right If you won't say it, then he's no soldier

Marie I'll say it

Julie Go on

Marie No, I won't [She weeps again]

Julie Then he's not a soldier. I guess he's a letter-carrier—

Marie No—no—I'd rather say it.

Julie Well, then

Marie [Giggling] But you mustn't look at me You look the other way, and I'll say it [JULIE looks away MARIE can hardly restrain her own laughter] Wolf! [She laughs] That's his real name Wolf, Wolf, Soldier—Wolf!

Julie What kind of a uniform does he wear?

Marie Red

Julie Red trousers?

Marie No

Julie Red coat?

Marie No

Julie What then?

Marie [Triumphantly] His cap!

Julie [After a long pause] He's just a porter, you dunce Red cap that's a porter—and he doesn't carry a gun or a sword, either

Marie [Triumphantly] But he salutes You said yourself that was the only way to tell a soldier—

Julie He doesn't salute at all He only greets people—

Marie He salutes me And if his name is Wolf, that doesn't prove he ain't a soldier—he salutes, and he wears a red cap and he stands on guard all day long outside a big building—

Julie What does he do there?

Marie [Seriously] He spits

Julie [With contempt] He's nothing—nothing but a common porter

Marie What's Lihom?

Julie [Indignantly] Why speak of him? What has he to do with me?

*Marie* The same as Wolf has to do with me. If you can talk to me like that about Wolf, I can talk to you about Liliom.

*Julie* He's nothing to me. He put his arm around me in the carousel. I couldn't tell him not to put his arm around me after he had done it, could I?

*Marie* I suppose you didn't like him to do it?

*Julie* No.

*Marie* Then why are you waiting for him? Why don't you go home?

*Julie* Why—eh—he said we were to wait for him.

[*LILIOM enters. There is a long silence.*]

*Liliom* Are you still here? What are you waiting for?

*Marie* You told us to wait.

*Liliom* Must you always interfere? No one is talking to you.

*Marie* You asked us—why we—

*Liliom* Will you keep your mouth shut? What do you suppose I want with two of you? I meant that one of you was to wait. The other can go home.

*Marie* All right.

*Julie* All right. [*Neither starts to go.*]

*Liliom* One of you goes home. [*To MARIE*] Where do you work?

*Marie* At the Breier's, Damjanovitsch Street, Number 20.

*Liliom* And you?

*Julie* I work there, too.

*Liliom* Well, one of you goes home. Which of you wants to stay? [*There is no answer.*] Come on, speak up, which of you stays?

*Marie* [*Officiously*] She'll lose her job if she stays.

*Liliom* Who will?

*Marie* Julie. She has to be back by seven o'clock.

*Liliom* Is that true? Will they discharge you if you're not back on time?

*Julie* Yes.

*Liliom* Well, wasn't I discharged?

*Julie* Yes—you were discharged, too.

*Marie* Julie, shall I go?

*Julie* I—can't tell you what to do.

*Marie* All right—stay if you like.

*Liliom* You'll be discharged if you do?

*Marie* Shall I go, Julie?

*Julie* [*Embarrassed*] Why do you keep asking me that?

*Marie* You know best what to do.

*Julie* [*Profoundly moved, slowly*] It's all right, Marie, you can go home.

*Marie* [*Exits reluctantly, but comes back, and says uncertainly*] Good-night.

[*She waits a moment to see if*

*JULIE* will follow her. *JULIE* does not move. *MARIE* exits. *Mean-time* it has grown quite dark. *During* the following scene the gas-lamps far in the distance are lighted one by one. *LILIOM* and *JULIE* sit on the bench. From afar, very faintly, comes the music of a calliope. But the music is intermittently heard, now it breaks off, now it resumes again, as if it came down on a fitful wind. Blending with it are the sounds of human voices, now loud, now soft, the blare of a toy trumpet, the confused noises of the show-booths. It grows progressively darker until the end of the scene. There is no moonlight. The spring wilderness glows in the deep blue sky.]

*Liliom* Now we're both discharged. [*She does not answer. From now on they speak gradually lower and lower until the end of the scene, which is played almost in whispers. Whistles softly, then.*] Have you had your supper?

*Julie* No.

*Liliom* Want to go eat something at the Garden?

*Julie* No.

*Liliom* Anywhere else?

*Julie* No.

*Liliom* [*Whistles softly, then.*] You don't come to this park very often, do you? I've only seen you three times. Been here oftener than that?

*Julie* Oh, yes.

*Liliom* Did you see me?

*Julie* Yes.

*Liliom* And did you know I was Liliom?

*Julie* They told me.

*Liliom* [*Whistles softly, then.*] Have you got a sweetheart?

*Julie* No.

*Liliom* Don't lie to me.

*Julie* I haven't. If I had, I'd tell you. I've never had one.

*Lilhom* What an awful liar you are I've got a good mind to go away and leave you here

*Julie* I've never had one

*Lilhom* Tell that to someone else

*Julie* [*Reproachfully*] Why do you insist I have?

*Lilhom* Because you stayed here with me the first time I asked you to You know your way around, you do

*Julie* No, I don't, Mister Lilhom

*Lilhom* I suppose you'll tell me you don't know why you're sitting here—like this, in the dark, alone with me—You wouldn't 'a' stayed so quick, if you hadn't done it before—with some soldier, maybe This isn't the first time You wouldn't have been so ready to stay if it was—what *did* you stay for, anyhow?

*Julie* So you wouldn't be left alone

*Lilhom* Alone! God, you're dumb! I don't need to be alone I can have all the girls I want Not only servant girls like you, but cooks and governesses, even French girls I could have twenty of them if I wanted to

*Julie* I know, Mister Lilhom.

*Lilhom* What do you know?

*Julie* That all the girls are in love with you But that's not why I stayed I stayed because you've been so good to me

*Lilhom* Well, then you can go home

*Julie* I don't want to go home now

*Lilhom* And what if I go away and leave you sitting here?

*Julie* If you did, I wouldn't go home

*Lilhom* Do you know what you remind me of? A sweetheart I had once—I'll tell you how I met her— One night, at closing time, we had put out the lights in the carousel, and just as I was—

[*He is interrupted by the entrance of two plainclothes policemen They take their stations on either side of the bench They are police, searching the park for vagabonds*]

*First Policeman* What are you doing there?

*Lilhom* Me?

*Second Policeman* Stand up when you're spoken to! [*He taps LILIOM imperatively on the shoulder*]

*First Policeman* What's your name?

*Lilhom* Andreas Zavoczki [*JULIE begins to weep softly*]

*Second Policeman* Stop your bawling. We're not goin' to eat you We are only making our rounds

*First Policeman* See that he doesn't get away [*The SECOND POLICEMAN steps closer to LILIOM*] What's your business?

*Lilhom* Barker and bouncer

*Second Policeman* They call him Lilhom, Chief We've had him up a couple of times

*First Policeman* So that's who you are! Who do you work for now?

*Lilhom* I work for the widow Muskat.

*First Policeman* What are you hanging around here for?

*Lilhom* We're just sitting here—me and this girl

*First Policeman* Your sweetheart?

*Lilhom* No

*First Policeman* [*To JULIE*] And who are you?

*Julie* Julie Zeller

*First Policeman* Servant girl?

*Julie* Maid of All Work for Mister Georg Breier, Number Twenty Damjanovitch Street

*First Policeman* Show your hands

*Second Policeman* [*After examining JULIE's hand*] Servant girl

*First Policeman* Why aren't you at home? What are you doing out here with him?

*Julie* This is my day out, sir

*First Policeman* It would be better for you if you didn't spend it sitting around with a fellow like this

*Second Policeman* They'll be disappearing in the bushes as soon as we turn our backs

*First Policeman* He's only after your money We know this fine fellow He picks up you silly servant girls and takes what money you have Tomorrow you'll probably be coming around to report him If you do, I'll throw you out

*Julie* I haven't any money, sir

*First Policeman* Do you hear that, Lilhom?

*Lilhom* I'm not looking for her money

*Second Policeman* [*Nudging him warningly*] Keep your mouth shut

*First Policeman* It is my duty to warn you, my child, what kind of company



you're in He makes a specialty of servant girls -That's why he works in a carousel He gets hold of a girl, promises to marry her, then he takes her money and her ring

*Julie* But I haven't got a ring

*Second Policeman* You're not to talk unless you're asked a question

*First Policeman* You be thankful that I'm warning you It's nothing to me what you do I'm not your father, thank God But I'm telling you what kind of a fellow he is By tomorrow morning you'll be coming around to us to report him Now you be sensible and go home You needn't be afraid of him This officer will take you home if you're afraid

*Julie* Do I have to go?

*First Policeman* No, you don't have to go

*Julie* Then I'll stay, sir

*First Policeman* Well, you've been warned

*Julie* Yes, sir Thank you, sir

*First Policeman* Come on, Berkovics  
[*The POLICEMEN exit JULIE and LILHOM sit on the bench again*  
*There is a brief pause*]

*Julie* Well, and what then?

*Lilhom* [*Fails to understand*] Huh?

*Julie* You were beginning to tell me a story

*Lilhom* Me?

*Julie* Yes, about a sweetheart You said, one night, just as they were putting out the lights of the carousel— That's as far as you got

*Lilhom* Oh, yes, yes, just as the lights were going out, someone came along—a little girl with a big shawl—you know— She came—eh—from— Say—tell me— ain't you—that is, ain't you at all—afraid of me? The officer told you what kind of a fellow I am—and that I'd take your money away from you—

*Julie* You couldn't take it away—I haven't got any But if I had—I'd—I'd give it to you—I'd give it all to you

*Lilhom* You would?

*Julie* If you asked me for it

*Lilhom* Have you ever had a fellow you gave money to?

*Julie* No

*Lilhom* Haven't you ever had a sweetheart?

*Julie* No

*Lilhom* Someone you used to go walking with You've had one like that?

*Julie* Yes

*Lilhom* A soldier?

*Julie* He came from the same village I did

*Lilhom* That's what all the soldiers say. Where do you come from, anyway?

*Julie* Not far from here

[*There is a pause*]

*Lilhom* Were you in love with him?

*Julie* Why do you keep asking me that all the time, Mister Lilhom? I wasn't in love with him We only went walking together

*Lilhom* Where did you walk?

*Julie* In the park

*Lilhom* And your virtue? Where did you lose that?

*Julie* I haven't got any virtue.

*Lilhom* Well, you had once

*Julie* No, I never had I'm a respectable girl

*Lilhom* Yes, but you gave the soldier something

*Julie* Why do you question me like that, Mister Lilhom?

*Lilhom* Did you give him something?

*Julie* You have to But I didn't love him

*Lilhom* Do you love me?

*Julie* No, Mister Lilhom

*Lilhom* Then why do you stay here with me?

*Julie* Um—nothing

[*There is a pause The music from afar is plainly heard*]

*Lilhom* Want to dance?

*Julie* No I have to be very careful

*Lilhom* Of what?

*Julie* My—character

*Lilhom* Why?

*Julie* Because I'm never going to marry If I was going to marry, it would be different Then I wouldn't need to worry so much about my character It doesn't make any difference if you're married But I shan't marry—and that's why I've got to take care to be a respectable girl

*Lilhom* Suppose I were to say to you—I'll marry you

*Julie* You?

*Lilhom* That frightens you doesn't it?

You're thinking of what the officer said and you're afraid

*Julie* No, I'm not, Mister Liliom I don't pay any attention to what he said

*Lihom* But you wouldn't dare to marry anyone like me, would you?

*Julie* I know that—that—if I loved anyone—it wouldn't make any difference to me what he—even if I died for it.

*Lihom* But you wouldn't marry a rough guy like me—that is,—eh—if you loved me—

*Julie* Yes, I would—if I loved you, Mister Lihom

[*There is a pause*]

*Lihom* [*Whispers*] Well,—you just said—didn't you?—that you don't love me Well, why don't you go home then?

*Julie* It's too late now, they'd all be asleep

*Lihom* Locked out?

*Julie* Certainly

[*They are silent a while*]

*Lihom* I think—that even a low-down good-for-nothing—can make a man of himself

*Julie* Certainly

[*They are silent again A lamp-lighter crosses the stage, lights the lamp over the bench, and exits*]

*Lihom* Are you hungry?

*Julie* No [*Another pause*]

*Lihom* Suppose—you had some money—and I took it from you?

*Julie* Then you could take it, that's all

*Lihom* [*After another brief silence*] All I have to do—is go back to her—that Muskat woman—she'll be glad to get me back—then I'd be earning my wages again [*She is silent The twilight folds darker about them*]

*Julie* [*Very softly*] Don't go back—to her— [*Pause*]

*Lihom* There are a lot of acacia trees around here [*Pause*]

*Julie* Don't go back to her— [*Pause*]

*Lihom* She'd take me back the minute I asked her I know why—she knows, too— [*Pause*]

*Julie* I can smell them, too—acacia blossoms—

[*There is a pause Some blossoms drift down from the tree-top to*

*the bench Liliom picks one up and smells it*]

*Lihom* White acacias!

*Julie* [*After a brief pause*] The wind brings them down

[*They are silent There is a long pause before*]

## SCENE TWO

SCENE—A photographer's "studio," operated by the HOLLUNDERS, on the fringe of the park It is a dilapidated house The general entrance is Back Left Back Right there is a window with a sofa before it The outlook is on the amusement park with perhaps a small Ferris-wheel or the scaffolding of a "scenic-railway" in the background.

The door to the kitchen is up Left and a black-curtained entrance to the dark-room is down Left Just in front of the dark-room stands the camera on its tripod Against the back wall, between the door and window, stands the inevitable photographer's background-screen, ready to be wheeled into place

It is forenoon When the curtain rises, MARIN and JULIE are discovered

*Marie* And he beat up Hollinger?

*Julie* Yes, he gave him an awful licking

*Marie* But Hollinger is bigger than he is

*Julie* He licked him just the same It isn't size that counts, you know, it's cleverness And Lihom's awful quick

*Marie* And then he was arrested?

*Julie* Yes, they arrested him, but they let him go the next day That makes twice in the two months we've been living here that Lihom's been arrested and let go again

*Marie* Why do they let him go?

*Julie* Because he is innocent

[*MOTHER HOLLUNDER, a very old woman, sharp-tongued, but in reality quite warm-hearted beneath her formidable exterior, enters at back carrying a few sticks of firewood, and scolding, half to herself*]

*Mother Hollunder* Always wanting something, but never willing to work for it He won't work, and he won't steal, but he'll use up a poor old widow's last bit of

firewood He'll do that cheerfully enough! A big, strong lout like that lying around all day resting his lazy bones! He ought to be ashamed to look decent people in the face

*Julie* I'm sorry, Mother Hollunder . .

*Mother Hollunder* Sorry! Better be sorry the lazy good-for-nothing ain't in jail where he belongs instead of in the way of honest, hard-working people. [*She exits into the kitchen*]

*Marie* Who's that?

*Julie* Mrs Hollunder—my aunt This is her [*with a sweeping gesture that takes in the camera, dark-room and screen*] studio She lets us live here for nothing

*Marie* What's she fetching the wood for?

*Julie* She brings us everything we need If it weren't for her I don't know what would become of us She's a good-hearted soul even if her tongue is sharp

[*There is a pause*]

*Marie* [*Shyly*] Do you know—I've found out He's not a soldier

*Julie* Do you still see him?

*Marie* Oh, yes

*Julie* Often?

*Marie* Very often He's asked me—

*Julie* To marry you?

*Marie* To marry me

*Julie* You see—that proves he isn't a soldier

[*There is another pause*]

*Marie* [*Abashed, yet a bit boastfully*] Do you know what I'm doing—I'm flirting with him

*Julie* Flirting?

*Marie* Yes He asks me to go to the park—and I say I can't go Then he coaxes me, and promises me a new scarf for my head if I go But I don't go—even then So then he walks all the way home with me—and I bid him good-night at the door

*Julie* Is that what you call flirting?

*Marie* Um-hm! It's sinful, but it's so thrilling

*Julie* Do you ever quarrel?

*Marie* [*Grandly*] Only when our Passionate Love surges up

*Julie* Your passionate love?

*Marie* Yes . . . He takes my hand and we walk along together Then he wants to swing hands, but I won't let him I say "Don't swing my hand", and he says, "Don't be so stubborn" And then

he tries to swing my hand again, but still I don't let him And for a long time I don't let him—until in the end I let him Then we walk along swinging hands—up and down, up and down—just like this That is Passionate Love It's sinful, but it's awfully thrilling

*Julie* You're happy, aren't you?

*Marie* Happier than—anything— But the most beautiful thing on earth is Ideal Love

*Julie* What kind is that?

*Marie* Daylight comes about three in the morning this time of the year When we've been up that long we're all through with flirting and Passionate Love—and then our Ideal Love comes to the surface It comes like this I'll be sitting on the bench and Wolf, he holds my hand tight—and he puts his cheek against my cheek and we don't talk . . . we just sit there very quiet . . . And after a while he gets sleepy, and his head sinks down, and he falls asleep but even in his sleep he holds tight to my hand And I—I sit perfectly still just looking around me and taking long, deep breaths—for by that time it's morning and the trees and flowers are fresh with dew But Wolf doesn't smell anything because he's so fast asleep And I get awfully sleepy myself, but I don't sleep And we sit like that for a long time. That is Ideal Love—

[*There is a long pause*]

*Julie* [*Regretfully, uneasily*] He went out last night and he hasn't come home yet

*Marie* Here are sixteen Kreuzer It was supposed to be carfare to take my young lady to the conservatory—eight there and eight back—but I made her walk Here—save it with the rest

*Julie* This makes three gulden, forty-six.

*Marie* Three gulden, forty-six

*Julie* He won't work at all

*Marie* Too lazy?

*Julie* No He never learned a trade, you see, and he can't just go and be a day-laborer—so he just does nothing

*Marie* That ain't right

*Julie* No Have the Breiers got a new maid yet?

*Marie* They've had three since you left. You know, Wolf's going to take a new job.

He's going to work for the city He'll get rent free, too

*Julie* He won't go back to work at the carousel either I ask him why, but he won't tell me— Last Monday he hit me

*Marie* Did you hit him back?

*Julie* No

*Marie* Why don't you leave him?

*Julie* I don't want to

*Marie* I would I'd leave him

[*There is a strained silence*]

*Mother Hollunder* [*Enters, carrying a pot of water, muttering aloud*] He can play cards, all right He can fight, too, and take money from poor servant girls And the police turn their heads the other way— The carpenter was here

*Julie* Is that water for the soup?

*Mother Hollunder* The carpenter was here There's a man for you! Dark, handsome, lots of hair, a respectable widower with two children—and money, and a good paying business

*Julie* [*To MARIE*] It's three gulden sixty-six, not forty-six

*Marie* Yes, that's what I make it—sixty-six

*Mother Hollunder* He wants to take her out of this and marry her This is the fifth time he's been here He has two children, but—

*Julie* Please don't bother, Aunt Hollunder, I'll get the water myself

*Mother Hollunder* He's waiting outside now

*Julie* Send him away

*Mother Hollunder* He'll only come back again—and first thing you know that vagabond will get jealous and there'll be a fight [*Goes out, muttering*] Oh, he's ready enough to fight, he is Strike a poor little girl like that! Ought to be ashamed of himself! And the police just let him go on doing as he pleases [*Still scolding, she exits at back*]

*Marie* A carpenter wants to marry you?

*Julie* Yes

*Marie* Why don't you?

*Julie* Because—

*Marie* Liliom doesn't support you, and he beats you—he thinks he can do whatever he likes just because he's Liliom He's a bad one

*Julie* He's not really bad

*Marie* That night you sat on the bench together—he was gentle then

*Julie* Yes, he was gentle

*Marie* And afterwards he got wild again

*Julie* Afterwards he got wild—sometimes But that night on the bench he was gentle He's gentle now, sometimes, very gentle After supper, when he stands there and listens to the music of the carousel, something comes over him—and he is gentle

*Marie* Does he say anything?

*Julie* He doesn't say anything He gets thoughtful and very quiet, and his big eyes stare straight ahead of him

*Marie* Into your eyes?

*Julie* Not exactly He's unhappy because he isn't working That's really why he hit me on Monday

*Marie* That's a fine reason for hitting you! Beats his wife because he isn't working, the ruffian!

*Julie* It preys on his mind—

*Marie* Did he hurt you?

*Julie* [*Very eagerly*] Oh, no

*Mrs Muskat* [*Enters haughtily*] Good morning Is Liliom home?

*Julie* No

*Mrs Muskat* Gone out?

*Julie* He hasn't come home yet.

*Mrs Muskat* I'll wait for him [*She sits down*]

*Marie* You've got a lot of gall—to come here

*Mrs Muskat* Are you the lady of the house, my dear? Better look out or you'll get a slap in the mouth

*Marie* How dare you set foot in Julie's house?

*Mrs Muskat* [*To JULIE*] Pay no attention to her, my child You know what brings me here That vagabond, that good-for-nothing I've come to give him his bread and butter back

*Marie* He's not dependent on you for his bread

*Mrs Muskat* [*To JULIE*] Just ignore her, my child She's just ignorant

*Marie* [*Going*] Good-bye

*Julie* Good-bye

*Marie* [*In the doorway, calling back*] Sixty-six

*Julie* Yes, sixty-six

*Marie* Good-bye [*She goes out JULIE starts to go toward the kitchen*]

*Mrs Muskat* I paid him a krone a day, and on Sunday a gulden. And he got all the beer and cigars he wanted from the customers. [*JULIE pauses on the threshold, but does not answer*] And he'd rather starve than beg my pardon. Well, I don't insist on that. I'll take him back without it. [*JULIE does not answer*] The fact is the people ask for him—and, you see, I've got to consider business first. It's nothing to me if he starves. I wouldn't be here at all, if it wasn't for business— [*She pauses, for LILKOM and FICSUR have entered*]

*Juhe* Mrs Muskat is here

*Lilkom* I see she is

*Juhe* You might say good-morning

*Lilkom* What for? And what do you want, anyhow?

*Juhe* I don't want anything

*Lilkom* Then keep your mouth shut. Next thing you'll be starting to nag again about my being out all night and out of work and living on your relations—

*Juhe* I'm not saying anything

*Lilkom* But it's all on the tip of your tongue—I know you—now don't start or you'll get another

[*He paces angrily up and down. They are all a bit afraid of him, and shrink and look away as he passes them. FICSUR shambles from place to place, his eyes cast down as if he were searching for something on the floor*]

*Mrs Muskat* [*Suddenly, to FICSUR*] You're always dragging him out to play cards and drink with you. I'll have you locked up, I will.

*Ficsur* I don't want to talk to you. You're too common. [*He goes out by the door at back and lingers there in plain view. There is a pause*]

*Juhe* Mrs Muskat is here

*Lilkom* Well, why doesn't she open her mouth, if she has anything to say?

*Mrs Muskat* Why do you go around with this man Ficsur? He'll get you mixed up in one of his robberies first thing you know.

*Lilkom* What's it to you who I go with? I do what I please. What do you want?

*Mrs Muskat* You know what I want

*Lilkom* No, I don't

*Mrs. Muskat* What do you suppose I

want? Think I've come just to pay a social call?

*Lilkom* Do I owe you anything?

*Mrs Muskat* Yes, you do—but that's not what I came for. You're a fine one to come to for money! You earn so much these days! You know very well what I'm here for.

*Lilkom* You've got Hollinger at the carousel, haven't you?

*Mrs Muskat* Sure I have

*Lilkom* Well, what else do you want? He's as good as I am.

*Mrs Muskat* You're quite right, my boy. He's every bit as good as you are. I'd not dream of letting him go. But one isn't enough any more. There's work enough for two—

*Lilkom* One was enough when I was there.

*Mrs Muskat.* Well, I might let Hollinger go—

*Lilkom* Why let him go, if he's so good?

*Mrs Muskat* [*Shrugs her shoulders*] Yes, he's good. [*Not once until now has she looked at LILKOM*]

*Lilkom* [*To JULIE*] Ask your aunt if I can have a cup of coffee. [*JULIE exits into the kitchen*] So Hollinger is good, is he?

*Mrs Muskat* [*Crosses to him and looks him in the face*] Why don't you stay home and sleep at night? You're a sight to look at.

*Lilkom* He's good, is he?

*Mrs Muskat* Push your hair back from your forehead.

*Lilkom* Let my hair be. It's nothing to you.

*Mrs Muskat* All right. But if I'd told you to let it hang down over your eyes you'd have pushed it back—I hear you've been beating her, this—this—

*Lilkom* None of your business.

*Mrs Muskat* You're a fine fellow! Beating a skinny little thing like that! If you're tired of her, leave her, but there's no use beating the poor—

*Lilkom* Leave her, eh? You'd like that, wouldn't you?

*Mrs Muskat* Don't flatter yourself. [*Quite embarrassed*] Serves me right, too. If I had any sense I wouldn't have run after you. My God, the things one must do for the sake of business! If I

could only sell the carousel I wouldn't be sitting here . Come, Lihom, if you have any sense, you'll come back I'll pay you well

*Lihom* The carousel is crowded just the same *without me?*

*Mrs Muskat* Crowded, yes—but it's not the same

*Lihom.* Then you admit that you *do* miss me

*Mrs Muskat* Miss you? Not I But the silly girls miss you They're always asking for you Well, are you going to be sensible and come back?

*Lihom* And leave—her?

*Mrs Muskat* You beat her, don't you?

*Lihom* No, I don't beat her What's all this damn fool talk about beating her? I hit her once—that was all—and now the whole city seems to be talking about it You don't call that beating her, do you?

*Mrs Muskat* All right, all right I take it back I don't want to get mixed up in it

*Lihom* Beating her! As if I'd beat her—

*Mrs Muskat* I can't make out why you're so concerned about her You've been married to her two months—it's plain to see that you're sick of it—and out there is the carousel—and the show booths—and money—and you'd throw it all away For what? Heavens, how can anyone be such a fool? [*Looks at him appraisingly*] Where have you been all night? You look awful

*Lihom* It's no business of yours

*Mrs Muskat* You never used to look like that This life is telling on you [*Pauses*] Do you know—I've got a new organ

*Lihom* [*Softly*] I know

*Mrs Muskat* How did you know?

*Lihom* You can hear it—from here

*Mrs Muskat* It's a good one, eh?

*Lihom* [*Wistfully*] Very good Fine It roars and snorts—so fine

*Mrs Muskat* You should hear it close by—it's heavenly Even the carousel seems to know it goes quicker I got rid of those two horses—you know, the ones with the broken ears?

*Lihom* What have you put in their places?

*Mrs Muskat* Guess

*Lihom* Zebras?

*Mrs Muskat* No—an automobile

*Lihom* [*Transported*] An automobile—

*Mrs Muskat* Yes If you've got any sense you'll come back What good are you doing here? Out there is your art, the only thing you're fit for You are an artist, not a respectable married man

*Lihom* Leave her—this little—

*Mrs Muskat* She'll be better off She'll go back and be a servant girl again As for you—you're an artist and you belong among artists All the beer you want, cigars, a krone a day and a gulden on Sunday, and the girls, Lihom, the girls—I've always treated you right, haven't I? I bought you a watch, and—

*Lihom* She's not that kind She'd never be a servant girl again

*Mrs Muskat* I suppose you think she'd kill herself Don't worry Heavens, if every girl was to commit suicide just because her— [*Finishes with a gesture*]

*Lihom* [*Stares at her a moment, considering, then with sudden, smiling animation*] So the people don't like Hollinger?

*Mrs Muskat* You know very well they don't, you rascal

*Lihom* Well—

*Mrs Muskat* You've always been happy at the carousel It's a great life—pretty girls and beer and cigars and music—a great life and an easy one I'll tell you what—come back and I'll give you a ring that used to belong to my dear departed husband Well, will you come?

*Lihom* She's not that kind She'd never be a servant girl again But—but—for my part—if I decide—that needn't make any difference I can go on living with her even if I do go back to my art—

*Mrs Muskat* My God!

*Lihom* What's the matter?

*Mrs Muskat* Who ever heard of a married man—I suppose you think all girls would be pleased to know that you were running home to your wife every night It's ridiculous! When the people found out they'd laugh themselves sick—

*Lihom* I know what you want

*Mrs Muskat* [*Refuses to meet his gaze*] You flatter yourself

*Lihom* You'll give me that ring, too?

*Mrs Muskat* [*Pushes the hair back from his forehead*] Yes

*Lihom* I'm not happy in this house

*Mrs Muskat* [*Still stroking his hair*] Nobody takes care of you

[*They are silent JULIE enters, carrying a cup of coffee MRS MUSKAT removes her hand from LILKOM's head There is a pause*]

*Lilkom* Do you want anything?

*Julie* No [*There is a pause She goes out slowly into the kitchen*]

*Mrs Muskat* The old woman says there is a carpenter, a widower, who—

*Lilkom* I know—I know—

*Julie* [*Reentering*] *Lilkom*, before I forget, I have something to tell you

*Lilkom* All right

*Julie* I've been wanting to tell you—in fact, I was going to tell you yesterday—

*Lilkom* Go ahead

*Julie* But I must tell you alone—if you'll come in—it will only take a minute

*Lilkom* Don't you see I'm busy now? Here I am talking business and you interrupt with—

*Julie* It'll only take a minute.

*Lilkom* Get out of here, or—

*Julie* But I tell you it will only take a minute—

*Lilkom* Will you get out of here?

*Julie* [*Courageously*] No

*Lilkom* [*Rising*] What's that!

*Julie* No

*Mrs Muskat* [*Rises, too*] Now don't start fighting I'll go out and look at the photographs in the show-case a while and come back later for your answer [*She goes out at back*]

*Julie* You can hit me again if you like—don't look at me like that I'm not afraid of you . I'm not afraid of anyone I told you I had something to tell you

*Lilkom* Well, out with it—quick

*Julie* I can't tell you so quick Why don't you drink your coffee?

*Lilkom* Is that what you wanted to tell me?

*Julie* No By the time you've drunk your coffee I'll have told you

*Lilkom* [*Gets the coffee and sips it*] Well?

*Julie* Yesterday my head ached—and you asked me—

*Lilkom* Yes—

*Julie* Well—you see—that's what it is—

*Lilkom* Are you sick?

*Julie* No . But you wanted to know what my headaches came from—and you said I seemed—changed

*Lilkom* Did I? I guess I meant the carpenter

*Julie* I've been—what? The carpenter? No It's something entirely different—it's awful hard to tell—but you'll have to know sooner or later—I'm not a bit—scared—because it's a perfectly natural thing—

*Lilkom* [*Puts the coffee cup on the table*] What?

*Julie* When—when a man and woman—live together—

*Lilkom* Yes

*Julie* I'm going to have a baby [*She goes out swiftly at back There is a pause FICSUR appears at the open window and looks in*]

*Lilkom* *Ficsur*! [*FICSUR sticks his head in*] Say, *Ficsur*,—*Julie* is going to have a baby

*Ficsur* Yes? What of it?

*Lilkom* Nothing [*Suddenly*] Get out of here

[*FICSUR's head is quickly withdrawn MRS MUSKAT reenters*]

*Mrs Muskat* Has she gone?

*Lilkom* Yes

*Mrs Muskat* I might as well give you ten kronen in advance [*Opens her purse LILKOM takes up his coffee cup*] Here you are [*She proffers some coins LILKOM ignores her*] Why don't you take it?

*Lilkom* [*Very nonchalantly, his cup poised ready to drink*] Go home, *Mrs Muskat*

*Mrs Muskat* What's the matter with you?

*Lilkom* Go home [*sips his coffee*] and let me finish my coffee in peace Don't you see I'm at breakfast?

*Mrs Muskat* Have you gone crazy?

*Lilkom* Will you get out of here? [*Turns to her threateningly*]

*Mrs Muskat* [*Restoring the coins to her purse*] I'll never speak to you again as long as you live

*Lilkom* That worries me a lot

*Mrs Muskat* Good-bye!

*Lilkom* Good-bye [*As she goes out, he calls*] *Ficsur*! [*FICSUR enters*] Tell me, *Ficsur* You said you knew a way to get a whole lot of money—

*Ficsur* Sure I do



Lahom How much?

Ficsur More than you ever had in your life before You leave it to an old hand like me

Mother Hollunder [*Enters from the kitchen*] In the morning he must have his coffee, and at noon his soup, and in the evening coffee again—and plenty of firewood—and I'm expected to furnish it all Give me back my cup and saucer

[*The show-booths of the amusement park have opened for business The familiar noises begin to sound, clear above them all, but far in the distance, sounds the organ of the carousel*]

Lahom Now, Aunt Hollunder

[*From now until the fall of the curtain it is apparent that the sound of the organ makes him more and more uneasy*]

Mother Hollunder And you, you vagabond, get out of here this minute or I'll call my son—

Ficsur I have nothing to do with the likes of him He's too common [*But he slinks out at back*]

Lahom Aunt Hollunder!

Mother Hollunder What now?

Lahom When your son was born—when you brought him into the world—

Mother Hollunder Well?

Lahom Nothing

Mother Hollunder [*Muttering as she goes out*] Sleep it off, you good-for-nothing lout Drink and play cards all night long—that's all you know how to do—and take the bread out of poor people's mouths—you can do that, too [*Exit*]

Lahom Ficsur!

Ficsur [*At the window*] Julie's going to have a baby You told me before

Lahom This scheme—about the cashier of the leather factory—there's money in it—

Ficsur Lots of money—but—it takes two to pull it off

Lahom [*Meditatively*] Yes [*Uneasily*] All right, Ficsur Go away—and come back later

[*FICSUR vanishes The organ in the distant carousel drones incessantly LILLOM listens a while, then goes to the door and calls*]

Lahom Aunt Hollunder! [*With naïve*

joy] Julie's going to have a baby [*Then he goes to the window, jumps on the sofa, looks out Suddenly, in a voice that overtops the droning of the organ, he shouts as if addressing the far-off carousel*] I'm going to be a father

Julie [*Enters from the kitchen*] Lahom! What's the matter? What's happened?

Lahom [*Coming down from the sofa*] Nothing

[*Throws himself on the sofa, buries his face in the cushion JULIE watches him a moment, comes over to him and covers him with a shawl Then she goes on tiptoe to the door at back and remains standing in the doorway, looking out and listening to the droning of the organ*]

### SCENE THREE

SCENE—*The setting is the same, later that afternoon LILLOM is sitting opposite FICSUR, who is teaching him a song JULIE hovers in the background, engaged in some household task*

Ficsur Listen now Here's the third verse [*Sings hoarsely*]

Look out, look out, my pretty lad,  
The damn police are on your trail,  
The nicest girl you ever had  
Has now commenced to weep and wail  
Look out here comes the damn police,  
The damn police,  
The damn police,  
Look out here comes the damn police,  
They'll get you every time.

Lahom [*Sings*]

Look out, look out, my pretty lad,  
The damn police—

Ficsur, Lahom [*Sing together.*]

Are on your trail  
The nicest girl you ever had  
Has now commenced to weep and wail

Lahom [*Alone*]

Look out here comes the damn police,  
The damn police,  
The damn police—

[*JULIE, troubled and uneasy, looks from one to the other, then exits into the kitchen*]

Ficsur [*When she has gone, comes quickly over to LILLOM and speaks fur*



*tively*] As you go down Franzen Street you come to the railroad embankment Beyond that—all the way to the leather factory—there's not a thing in sight, not even a watchman's hut

*Lihom* And does he always come that way?

*Ficsur* Yes Not along the embankment, but down below along the path across the fields Since last year he's been going alone Before that he always used to have someone with him

*Lihom* Every Saturday?

*Ficsur*. Every Saturday.

*Lihom* And the money? Where does he keep it?

*Ficsur* In a leather bag The whole week's pay for the workmen at the factory

*Lihom* Much?

*Ficsur* Sixteen thousand kronen Quite a haul, what?

*Lihom* What's his name?

*Ficsur* Linzman He's a Jew.

*Lihom* The cashier?

*Ficsur* Yes—but when he gets a knife between his ribs—or if I smash his skull for him—he won't be a cashier any more.

*Lihom* Does he have to be killed?

*Ficsur*. No, he doesn't *have* to be He can give up the money *without* being killed—but most of these cashiers are peculiar—they'd rather be killed

*[JULIE reenters, pretends to get something on the other side of the room, then exits at back During the ensuing dialogue she keeps coming in and out in the same way, showing plainly that she is suspicious and anxious She attempts to overhear what they are saying and, in spite of their caution, does catch a word here and there, which adds to her disquiet FICSUR, catching sight of her, abruptly changes the conversation]*

*Ficsur* And the next verse is

And when you're in the prison cell  
They'll feed you bread and water.

*Ficsur, Lihom* *[Sing together]*

They'll make your little sweetheart tell  
Them all the things you brought her.  
Look out here comes the damn police.  
The damn police,  
The damn police

Look out here comes the damn police  
They'll get you every time

*Lihom. [Sings alone]*

And when you're in the prison cell  
They'll feed you bread and water—"

*[Breaks off as JULIE exits]*

And when it's done, do we start right off for America?

*Ficsur* No.

*Lihom* What then?

*Ficsur* We bury the money for six months That's the usual time And after the sixth month we dig it up again

*Lihom* And then?

*Ficsur* Then you go on living just as usual for six months more—you don't touch a heller of the money

*Lihom* In six months the baby will be born

*Ficsur*. Then we'll take the baby with us, too Three months before the time you'll go to work so as to be able to say you saved up your wages to get to America

*Lihom* Which of us goes up and talks to him?

*Ficsur* One of us talks to him with his mouth and the other talks with his knife Depends on which you'd rather do I'll tell you what—you talk to him with your mouth

*Lihom* Do you hear that?

*Ficsur* What?

*Lihom* Outside . . . like the rattle of swords *[FICSUR listens After a pause, LIHOM continues]* What do I say to him?

*Ficsur* You say good evening to him and "Excuse me, sir, can you tell me the time?"

*Lihom* And then what?

*Ficsur* By that time I'll have stuck him—and then you take *your* knife—

*[He stops as a POLICEMAN enters at back]*

*Polceman* Good-day!

*Ficsur, Lihom* *[In unison]* Good-day!

*Ficsur* *[Calling toward the kitchen]*  
Hey, photographer, come out . . . Here's a customer

*[There is a pause The POLICEMAN waits FICSUR sings softly]*

And when you're in the prison cell

They'll feed you bread and water

They'll make your little sweetheart tell

*Lihom, Ficsur* *[Sing together, low]*

Them all the things you brought her  
Look out here comes the—

[*They hum the rest so as not to let the POLICEMAN hear the words "the damn police" As they sing, MRS HOLLUNDER and her son enter*]

*Policeman* Do you make cabinet photographs?

*Young Hollunder*. Certainly, sir [*Points to a rack of photographs on the wall*]  
Take your choice, sir Would you like one full length?

*Policeman* Yes, full length

[*MOTHER HOLLUNDER pushes out the camera while her son poses the POLICEMAN, runs from him to camera and back again, now altering the pose, now ducking under the black cloth and pushing the camera nearer Meanwhile MOTHER HOLLUNDER has fetched a plate from the dark-room and thrust it in the camera While this is going on, LILIOM and FICSUR, their heads together, speak in very low tones*]

*Lilhom* Belong around here?

*Ficsur* Not around here

*Lilhom* Where, then?

*Ficsur* Suburban [*There is a pause*]

*Lilhom* [*Bursts out suddenly in a rather grotesquely childish and overstrained lament*] O God, what a dirty life I'm leading—God, God!

*Ficsur* [*Reassuring him benevolently*]  
Over in America it will be better, all right

*Lilhom* What's over there?

*Ficsur* [*Virtuously*] Factories . . . industries—

*Young Hollunder* [*To the POLICEMAN*]  
Now, quite still, please One, two, three [*Defly removes the cover of the lens and in a few seconds restores it*] Thank you

*Mother Hollunder* The picture will be ready in five minutes

*Policeman* Good I'll come back in five minutes How much do I owe you?

*Young Hollunder* [*With exaggerated deference*] You don't need to pay in advance, Mr Commissioner

[*The POLICEMAN salutes condescendingly and goes out at back MOTHER HOLLUNDER carries the*

*plate into the dark-room YOUNG HOLLUNDER, after pushing the camera back in place, follows her*]

*Mother Hollunder* [*Muttering angrily as she passes FICSUR and LILIOM*] You hang around and dirty the whole place up! Why don't you go take a walk? Things are going so well with you that you have to sing, eh? [*Confronting FICSUR suddenly*] Weren't you frightened sick when you saw the policeman?

*Ficsur* [*With loathing*] Go 'way, or I'll step on you [*She goes out into the dark-room*]

*Lilhom* They like Hollinger at the carousel?

*Ficsur* I should say they do

*Lilhom* Did you see the Muskat woman, too?

*Ficsur* Sure She takes care of Hollinger's hair

*Lilhom* Combs his hair?

*Ficsur* She fixes him all up

*Lilhom* Let her fix him all she likes

*Ficsur* [*Urging him toward the kitchen door*] Go on Now's your chance

*Lilhom* What for?

*Ficsur* To get the knife

*Lilhom* What knife?

*Ficsur* The kitchen knife I've got a pocket-knife, but if he shows fight, we'll let him have the big knife

*Lilhom* What for? If he gets ugly, I'll bat him one over the head that'll make him squint for the rest of his life

*Ficsur* You've got to have something on you You can't slit his throat with a bat over the head

*Lilhom* Must his throat be slit?

*Ficsur* No, it *mustn't* But if he asks for it [*There is a pause*] You'd like to sail on the big steamer, wouldn't you? And you want to see the factories over there, don't you? But you're not willing to inconvenience yourself a little for them

*Lilhom* If I take the knife, Julie will see me

*Ficsur* Take it so she won't see you

*Lilhom* [*Advances a few paces toward the kitchen The POLICEMAN enters at back LILIOM knocks on the door of the dark-room*] Here's the policeman!

*Mother Hollunder* [*Coming out*] One minute more, please Just a minute [*She*

reenters the dark room. LILKOM hesitates a moment, then exits into the kitchen. The POLICEMAN scrutinizes FICSUR mockingly. FICSUR returns his stare, walks a few paces toward him, then deliberately turns his back. Suddenly he wheels around, points at the POLICEMAN and addresses him in a teasing, childish tone.] Christiana Street at the corner of Rettl!

*Policeman* [Amazed, self-conscious] How do you know that?

*Ficsur* I used to practice my profession in that neighborhood

*Policeman* What is your profession?

*Ficsur* Professor of pianola—

[The POLICEMAN glares, aware that the man is joking with him, twirls his moustache indignantly. YOUNG HOLLUNDER comes out of the dark-room and gives him the finished pictures.]

*Young Hollunder* Here you are, sir

[The POLICEMAN examines the photographs, pays for them, starts to go, stops, glares at FICSUR and exits. When he is gone, FICSUR goes to the doorway and looks out after him. YOUNG HOLLUNDER exits. LILKOM reenters, buttoning his coat.]

*Ficsur* [Turns, sees LILKOM] What are you staring at?

*Lilkom* I'm not staring

*Ficsur* What then are you doing?

*Lilkom* I'm thinking it over

*Ficsur* [Comes very close to him] Tell me then—what will you say to him?

*Lilkom* [Unsteadily] I'll say—"Good evening—Excuse me, sir—Can you tell me the time?" And suppose he answers me, what do I say to him?

*Ficsur* He won't answer you

*Lilkom* Don't you think so?

*Ficsur* No [Feeling for the knife under LILKOM's coat] Where is it? Where did you put it?

*Lilkom* [Stonily] Left side

*Ficsur* That's right—over your heart [Feels it] Ah—there it is—there—there's the blade—quite a big fellow, isn't it—ah, here it begins to get narrower [Reaches the tip of the knife] And here is its eye—that's what it sees with [JULIE enters from the kitchen, passes them slowly, watching them in silent terror, then stops

*Ficsur nudges LILKOM] Sing, come on, sing!*

*Lilkom* [In a quavering voice]

Look out for the damn police

*Ficsur* [Joining in cheerily, loudly, marking time with the swaying of his body]

Look out, look out, my pretty lad

*Lilkom* —look out, my pretty lad

[JULIE goes out at back. LILKOM's glance follows her. When she has gone, he turns to FICSUR.] At night—in my dreams—if his ghost comes back—what will I do then?

*Ficsur* His ghost won't never come back.

*Lilkom* Why not?

*Ficsur* A Jew's ghost don't come back.

*Lilkom* Well then—afterwards—

*Ficsur* [Impatiently] What do you mean—afterwards?

*Lilkom* In the next world—when I come up before the Lord God—what'll I say then?

*Ficsur* The likes of you will never come up before Him.

*Lilkom* Why not?

*Ficsur* Have you ever come up before the high court?

*Lilkom* No

*Ficsur* Our kind comes up before the police magistrate—and the highest we ever get is the criminal court

*Lilkom* Will it be the same in the next world?

*Ficsur* Just the same. We'll come up before a police magistrate, same as we did in this world

*Lilkom* A police magistrate?

*Ficsur* Sure. For the rich folks—the Heavenly Court. For us poor people—only a police magistrate. For the rich folks—fine music and angels. For us—

*Lilkom* For us?

*Ficsur* For us, my son, there's only justice. In the next world there'll be lots of justice, yes, nothing but justice. And where there's justice there must be police magistrates, and where there're police magistrates, people like us get—

*Lilkom* [Interrupting] Good evening. Excuse me, sir, can you tell me the time? [Lays his hand over his heart]

*Ficsur* What do you put your hand there for?

*Lilkom* My heart is jumping—under the knife

*Ficsur* Put it on the other side then.

[Looks out at the sky] It's time we started—  
—we'll walk slow—

Lahom It's too early

Ficsur Come on

[As they are about to go, JULIE appears in the doorway at back, obstructing the way]

Julie Where are you going with him?

Lahom Where am I going with him?

Julie Stay home

Lahom No

Julie Stay home It's going to rain soon, and you'll get wet

Ficsur It won't rain

Julie How do you know?

Ficsur I always get notice in advance

Julie Stay home This evening the carpenter's coming I've asked him to give you work.

Lahom I'm not a carpenter

Julie [More and more anxious, though she tries to conceal it] Stay home Marie's coming with her intended to have their picture taken She wants to introduce us to her intended husband

Lahom I've seen enough intended husbands—

Julie Stay home Marie's bringing some money, and I'll give it all to you

Lahom [Approaching the door] I'm going—for a walk—with Ficsur We'll be right back

Julie [Forcing a smile to keep back her tears] If you stay home, I'll get you a glass of beer—or wine, if you prefer

Ficsur Coming or not?

Julie I'm not angry with you any more for hitting me

Lahom [Gruffly, but his gruffness is simulated to hide the fact that he cannot bear the sight of her suffering] Stand out of the way—or I'll— [He clenches his fist] Let me out!

Julie [Trembling] What have you got under your coat?

Lahom [Produces from his pocket a greasy pack of cards] Cards

Julie [Trembling, speaks very low] What's under your coat?

Lahom Let me out!

Julie [Obstructing the way Speaks quickly, eagerly, in a last effort to detain him] Marie's intended knows about a place for a married couple without children to be caretakers of a house on Arader

Street Rent free, a kitchen of your own, and the privilege of keeping chickens—

Lahom Get out of the way!

[JULIE stands aside LILIOM goes out FICSUR follows him JULIE remains standing meditatively in the doorway MOTHER HOLLUNDER comes out of the kitchen]

Mother Hollunder I can't find my kitchen knife anywhere Have you seen anything of it?

Julie [Horried] No

Mother Hollunder It was on the kitchen table just a few minutes ago No one was in there except Lahom

Julie He didn't take it

Mother Hollunder No one else was in there

Julie What would Lahom want with a kitchen knife?

Mother Hollunder He'd sell it and spend the money on drink

Julie It just so happens—see how unjust you are to him—it just so happens that I went through all of Liliom's pockets just now—I wanted to see if he had any money on him But he had nothing but a pack of cards

Mother Hollunder [Returns to the kitchen, grumbling] Cards in his pocket—cards! The fine gentlemen have evidently gone off to their club to play a little game

[She goes out After a pause MARIE, happy and beaming, appears in the doorway at back, and enters, followed by WOLF]

Marie Here we are! [She takes WOLF by the hand and leads him, grinning shyly, to JULIE, who has turned at her call] Hello!

Julie Hello

Marie Well, we're here

Julie Yes

Wolf [Bows awkwardly and extends his hand] My name is Wolf Beifeld

Julie My name is Julie Zeller

[They shake hands There is an embarrassed silence Then, to relieve the situation, WOLF takes JULIE's hand again and shakes it vigorously]

Marie Well—this is Wolf

Wolf Yes

Julie Yes [Another awkward silence]

Marie Where is Lahom?

*Wolf* Yes, where is your husband?

*Julie* He's out

*Marie* Where?

*Julie* Just for a walk.

*Marie* Is he?

*Julie* Yes

*Wolf* Oh! [Another silence]

*Marie* Wolf's got a new place After the first of the month he won't have to stand outside any more He's going to work in a club after the first of the month

*Wolf* [Apologetically] She don't know yet how to explain these things just right—hehehe— Beginning the first I'm to be second steward at the Burger Club—a good job, if one conducts oneself properly

*Julie* Yes?

*Wolf* The pay—is quite good—but the main thing is the tips When they play cards there's always a bit for the steward The tips, I may say, amount to twenty, even thirty kronen every night.

*Marie* Yes

*Wolf* We've rented two rooms for ourselves to start with—and if things go well—

*Marie* Then we'll buy a house in the country

*Wolf* If one only tends to business and keeps honest Of course, in the country we'll miss the city life, but if the good Lord sends us children—it's much healthier for children in the country

[There is a brief pause]

*Marie* Wolf's nice looking, isn't he?

*Julie* Yes

*Marie* And he's a good boy, Wolf.

*Julie* Yes

*Marie* The only thing is—he's a Jew

*Julie* Oh, well you can get used to that

*Marie* Well, aren't you going to wish us luck?

*Julie* Of course I do. [She embraces MARIE]

*Marie* And aren't you going to kiss Wolf, too?

*Julie* Him, too [She embraces WOLF, remains quite still a moment, her head resting on his shoulder]

*Wolf* Why are you crying, my dear Mrs— [He looks questionably at MARIE over JULIE'S shoulder]

*Marie* Because she has such a good heart [She becomes sentimental, too]

*Wolf* [Touched] We thank you for your heartfelt sympathy—

[He cannot restrain his own tears There is a pause before MOTHER HOLLUNDER and her son enter YOUNG HOLLUNDER immediately busies himself with the camera]

*Mother Hollunder* Now if you don't mind, we'll do it right away, before it gets too dark [She leads MARIE and WOLF into position before the background-screen Here they immediately fall into an awkward pose, smiling mechanically] Full length?

*Marie* Please Both figures full length

*Mother Hollunder.* Bride and groom?

*Marie* Yes

*Mother Hollunder, Young Hollunder.* [Speak in unison, in loud professionally-expressionless tones] The lady looks at the gentleman and the gentleman looks straight into the camera.

*Mother Hollunder* [Poses first MARIE, then WOLF] Now, if you please

*Young Hollunder* [Who has crept under the black cloth, calls in muffled tones] That's good—that's very good!

*Marie* [Stonily rigid, but very happy, trying to speak without altering her expression] Julie, dear, do we look all right?

*Julie* Yes, dear.

*Young Hollunder.* Now, if you please, hold still I'll count up to three and then you must hold perfectly still [Grasps the cover of the lens and calls threateningly] One—two—three!

[He removes the cover; there is utter silence But as he speaks the word "one" there is heard, very faintly in the distance, the refrain of the thieves' song which FICSUR and LILJOM have been singing The refrain continues until the fall of the curtain As he speaks the word "three" everybody is perfectly rigid save JULIE, who lets her head sink slowly to the table. The distant refrain dies out]

#### SCENE FOUR

SCENE—In the fields on the outskirts of the city At back a railroad embankment crosses the stage obliquely At center of the embankment stands a red and white signal flag, and near it a little red signal lamp which is not yet lighted. Here also

a wooden stairway leads up to the embankment

At the foot of the embankment to the right is a pile of used railroad ties In the background a telegraph pole, beyond it a view of trees, fences and fields, still further back a factory building and a cluster of little dwellings

It is six o'clock of the same afternoon Dusk has begun to fall.

LILIOM and FICSUR are discovered on the stairway looking after the train which has just passed

Lihom Can you still hear it snort?

Ficsur Listen!

[They watch the vanishing train]

Lihom If you put your ear on the tracks you can hear it go all the way to Vienna

Ficsur Huh!

Lihom The one that just puffed past us—it goes all the way to Vienna

Ficsur No further?

Lihom Yes—further, too

[There is a pause]

Ficsur It must be near six. [As LILIOM ascends the steps] Where are you going?

Lihom Don't be afraid I'm not giving you the slip

Ficsur Why should you give me the slip? That cashier has sixteen thousand kronen on him Just be patient till he comes, then you can talk to him, nice and polite

Lihom I say, "Good evening—excuse me, sir, what time is it?"

Ficsur Then he tells you what time it is

Lihom Suppose he don't come?

Ficsur [Coming down the steps] Nonsense! He's got to come He pays off the workmen every Saturday And this is Saturday, ain't it? [LILIOM has ascended to the top of the stairway and is gazing along the tracks] What are you looking at up there?

Lihom The tracks go on and on—there's no end to them

Ficsur What's that to stare about?

Lihom Nothing—only I always look after the train When you stand down there at night it snorts past you, and spits down.

Ficsur Spits?

Lihom Yes, the engine It spits down And then the whole train rattles past and

away—and you stand there—spat on—but it draws your eyes along with it

Ficsur Draws your eyes along?

Lihom Yes—whether you want to or not, you've got to look after it—as long as the tiniest bit of it is in sight

Ficsur Swell people sit in it

Lihom And read newspapers

Ficsur And smoke cigars

Lihom And inhale the smoke

[There is a short silence]

Ficsur Is he coming?

Lihom Not yet [Silence again LILIOM comes down, speaks low, confidentially] Do you hear the telegraph wires?

Ficsur I hear them when the wind blows

Lihom Even when the wind doesn't blow you can hear them humming, humming— People talk through them.

Ficsur Who?

Lihom Jews

Ficsur No—they telegraph

Lihom They talk through them and from some other place they get answered And it all goes through the iron strings—that's why they hum like that—they—hum—

Ficsur What do they hum?

Lihom They hum! ninety-nine, ninety-nine Just listen

Ficsur What for?

Lihom That sparrow's listening, too He's cocked one eye and looks at me as if to say "I'd like to know what they're talking about"

Ficsur You're looking at a bird?

Lihom He's looking at me, too

Ficsur Listen, you're sick! There's something the matter with you Do you know what it is? Money That bird has no money, either, that's why he cocks his eye

Lihom Maybe

Ficsur Whoever has money don't cock his eye

Lihom What then does he do?

Ficsur He does anything he wants But nobody works unless he has money We'll soon have money ourselves

Lihom I say, "Good evening Excuse me, sir, can you tell me what time it is!"

Ficsur He's not coming yet Got the cards? [LILIOM gives him the pack of cards] Got any money?

Lihom [Takes some coins from his trousers pocket and counts] Eleven

*Ficsur* [*Sits astride on the pile of ties and looks off left*] All right—eleven

*Lahom* [*Sitting astride on the ties facing him*] Put it up

*Ficsur* [*Puts the money on the ties; rapidly shuffles the cards*] We'll play twenty-one I'll bank [*He deals deftly*]

*Lahom* [*Looks at his card*] Good I'll bet the bank

*Ficsur* Must have an ace! [*Deals him a second card*]

*Lahom* Another one [*He gets another card*] Another [*Gets still another*] Over! [*Throws down his cards FICSUR gathers in the money*] Come on!

*Ficsur* Come on what? Got no more money, have you?

*Lahom* No

*Ficsur* Then the game's over—unless you want to—

*Lahom* What?

*Ficsur* Play on credit

*Lahom* You'll trust me?

*Ficsur* No—but—I'll deduct it.

*Lahom* Deduct it from what?

*Ficsur* From your share of the money If you win you deduct from my share

*Lahom* [*Looks over his shoulder to see if the cashier is coming, nervous and ashamed*] All right How much is bank?

*Ficsur* That cashier is bringing us sixteen thousand kronen Eight thousand of that is mine Well, then, the bank is eight thousand

*Lahom* Good

*Ficsur* Whoever has the most luck will have the most money [*He deals*]

*Lahom* Six hundred kronen [*FICSUR gives him another card*] Enough

*Ficsur* [*Laying out his own cards*] Twenty-one [*He shuffles rapidly*]

*Lahom* [*Moves excitedly nearer to FICSUR*] Well, then, double or nothing

*Ficsur* [*Dealing*] Double or nothing

*Lahom* [*Gets a card*] Enough

*Ficsur* [*Laying out his own cards*] Twenty-one [*Shuffles rapidly again*]

*Lahom* [*In alarm*] You're not—cheating?

*Ficsur* Me? Do I look like a cheat? [*Deals the cards again*]

*Lahom*. [*Glances nervously over his shoulder*] A thousand

*Ficsur* [*Nonchalantly*] Kronen?

*Lahom* Kronen [*He gets a card*] An-

other one [*Gets another card*] Over again! [*Like an inexperienced gambler who is losing heavily, LAHIOM is very nervous He plays dazedly, wildly, irrationally From now on it is apparent that his only thought is to win his money back*]

*Ficsur* That makes twelve hundred you owe

*Lahom* Double or nothing [*He gets a card He is greatly excited*] Another one [*Gets another card*] Another [*Throws down three cards*]

*Ficsur* [*Bends over and adds up the sum on the ground*] Ten—fourteen—twenty-three— You owe two thousand, four hundred

*Lahom* Now what?

*Ficsur* [*Takes a card out of the deck and gives it to him*] Here's the red ace You can play double or nothing again

*Lahom* [*Eagerly*] Good [*Gets another card*] Enough

*Ficsur* [*Turns up his own cards*] Nineteen

*Lahom* You win again [*Almost imploring*] Give me an ace again Give me the green one [*Takes a card*] Double or nothing

*Ficsur* Not any more.

*Lahom* Why not?

*Ficsur* Because if you lose you won't be able to pay Double would be nine thousand six hundred And you've only got eight thousand altogether

*Lahom* [*Greatly excited*] That—that—I call that a dirty trick!

*Ficsur* Three thousand, two hundred That's all you can put up

*Lahom* [*Eagerly*] All right, then—three thousand, two hundred [*FICSUR deals him a card*] Enough

*Ficsur* I've got an ace myself Now we'll have to take our time and squeeze 'em [*LILLOM pushes closer to him as he takes up his cards and slowly, intently unfolds them*] Twenty-one [*He quickly puts the cards in his pocket There is a pause*]

*Lahom* Now—now—I'll tell you now—you're a crook, a low-down—

[*Now LINZMAN enters at right He is a strong, robust, red-bearded Jew about 40 years of age At his side he carries a leather bag slung by a strap from his shoulder FICSUR coughs warningly*]



moves to the right between LINZMAN and the embankment, pauses just behind LINZMAN and follows him. LILIOM stands bewildered a few paces to the left of the railroad ties. He finds himself facing LINZMAN.]

Lilom [Trembling in every limb] Good evening. Excuse me, sir, can you tell me the time?

[FICSUR springs silently at LINZMAN, the little knife in his right hand. But LINZMAN catches FICSUR's right hand with his own left and forces FICSUR to his knees. Simultaneously LINZMAN thrusts his right hand into his coat pocket and produces a revolver which he points at LILIOM's breast. LILIOM is standing two paces away from the revolver. There is a long pause.]

Lanzman [In a low, even voice] It is twenty-five minutes past six. [Pauses, looks ironically down at FICSUR] It's lucky I grabbed the hand with the knife instead of the other one. [Pauses again, looks approvingly from one to the other.] Two fine birds! [To FICSUR] I should live so—Rothschild has more luck than you. [To LILIOM] I'd advise you to keep nice and quiet. If you make one move, you'll get two bullets in you. Just look into the barrel. You'll see some little things in there made of lead.

Ficsur Let me go. I didn't do anything.

Lanzman [Mockingly shakes the hand which still holds the knife] And this? What do you call this? Oh, yes, I know. You thought I had an apple in my pocket, and you wanted to peel it. That's it. Forgive me for my error. I beg your pardon, sir.

Lilom But I—I—

Lanzman Yes, my son, I know. It's so simple. You only asked what time it is. Well, it's twenty-five minutes after six.

Ficsur Let us go, honorable sir. We didn't do anything to you.

Lanzman In the first place, my son, I'm not an honorable sir. In the second place, for the same money, you could have said Your Excellency. But in the third place you'll find it very hard to beg off by flatter-  
ing me.

Lilom But I—I really didn't do anything to you.

Lanzman Look behind you, my boy. Don't be afraid. Look behind you, but don't run away or I'll have to shoot you down. [LILIOM turns his head slowly around.] Who's coming up there?

Lilom [Looking at LINZMAN] Police men.

Lanzman [To FICSUR] You hold still, or— [To LILIOM teasingly] How many policemen are there?

Lilom [His eyes cast down] Two.

Lanzman And what are the policemen sitting on?

Lilom Horses.

Lanzman And which can run faster, a horse or a man?

Lilom A horse.

Lanzman There, you see. It would be hard to get away now. [Laughs] I never saw such an unlucky pair of highway robbers. I can't imagine worse luck. Just today I had to put a pistol in my pocket. And even if I hadn't—old Lanzman is a match for four like you. But even that isn't all. Did you happen to notice, you even, what direction I came from? From the factory, didn't I? When I went there I had a nice bit of money with me. Sixteen thousand crowns! But now—not a heller. [Calls off left] Hey, come quicker, will you? This fellow is pulling pretty strong. [FICSUR frees himself with a mighty wrench and darts rapidly off. As LINZMAN aims his pistol at the vanishing FICSUR, LILIOM runs up the steps to the embankment. LINZMAN hesitates, perceives that LILIOM is the better target, points the pistol at him.] Stop, or I'll shoot! [Calls off left to the POLICEMEN] Why don't you come down off your horses? [His pistol is leveled at LILIOM, who stands on the embankment, facing the audience. From the left on the embankment, a POLICEMAN appears, revolver in hand.]

First Policeman Stop!

Lanzman Well, my boy, do you still want to know what time it is? From ten to twelve years in prison!

Lilom You won't get me! [LINZMAN laughs derisively. LILIOM is now three or four paces from the POLICEMAN and equally distant from LINZMAN. His face is uplifted to the sky. He bursts into laughter, half



defiant, half self-pitying, and takes the kitchen knife from under his coat] Julie! —[The ring of farewell is in the word He turns sideways, thrusts the knife deep in his breast, sways, falls and rolls down the far side of the embankment There is a long pause From the left up on the embankment come the TWO POLICEMEN]

Linzman What's the matter? [The FIRST POLICEMAN comes along the embankment as far as the steps, looks down in the opposite side, then climbs down at about the spot where LILIOM disappeared LINZMAN and the other POLICEMAN mount the embankment and look down on him] Stabbed himself?

Voice of First Policeman Yes—and he seems to have made a thorough job of it

Linzman [Excitedly to the SECOND POLICEMAN] I'll go and telephone to the hospital [He runs down the steps and goes out at left]

Second Policeman. Go to Eisler's grocery store and telephone to the factory from there They've a doctor there, too [Calling down to the other POLICEMAN] I'm going to tie up the horses [Comes down the steps and exits at left The stage is empty There is a pause The little red signal lamp is lit]

Voice of First Policeman Hey, Stephan!

Voice of Second Policeman What?

Voice of First Policeman Shall I pull the knife out of his chest?

Voice of Second Policeman Better not, or he may bleed to death [There is a pause]

Voice of First Policeman Stephan!

Voice of Second Policeman Yes

Voice of First Policeman Lot of mosquitoes around here

Voice of Second Policeman Yes

Voice of First Policeman Got a cigar?

Voice of Second Policeman No [There is a pause The FIRST POLICEMAN appears over the opposite side of the embankment]

First Policeman A lot of good the new pay-schedule's done us—made things worse than they used to be—we get more but we have less than we ever had If the Government could be made to realize that It's a thankless job at best You work hard year after year, you get gray in the service, and slowly you die—yes

Second Policeman. That's right.

First Policeman Yes [In the distance is heard the bell of the signal tower]

## SCENE FIVE

SCENE—The photographic "studio" a half hour later that same evening MOTHER HOLLUNDER, her son, MARIE and WOLF stand in a group back right, their heads together JULIE stands apart from them, a few paces to the left

Young Hollunder. [Who has just come in, tells his story excitedly] They're bringing him now Two workmen from the factory are carrying him on a stretcher.

Wolf Where is the doctor?

Young Hollunder. A policeman telephoned to headquarters The police-surgeon ought to be here any minute

Marie Maybe they'll pull him through after all

Young Hollunder He stabbed himself too deep in his chest But he's still breathing He can still talk, too, but very faintly At first he lay there unconscious, but when they put him on the stretcher he came to.

Wolf That was from the shaking

Marie We'd better make room [They make room Two workmen carry in LILIOM on a stretcher which has four legs and stands about as high as a bed They put the stretcher at left directly in front of the sofa, so that the head is at right and the foot at left Then they unobtrusively join the group at the door Later, they go out JULIE is standing at the side of the stretcher, where, without moving, she can see LILIOM's face The others crowd emotionally together near the door THE FIRST POLICEMAN enters]

First Policeman Are you his wife?

Julie Yes

First Policeman The doctor at the factory who bandaged him up forbade us to take him to the hospital—Dangerous to move him that far. What he needs now is rest Just let him be until the police-surgeon comes [To the group near the door] He's not to be disturbed [They make way for him He exits There is a pause]

Wolf [Gently urging the others out] Please—it's best if we all get out of here. We'll only be in the way

Marie [To JULIE] Julie, what do you

think? [JULIE looks at her without answering] Julie, can I do anything to help? [JULIE does not answer] We'll be just outside on the bench if you want us [MOTHER HOLLUNDER and her son have gone out when first requested Now MARIE and WOLF exit, too JULIE sits on the edge of the stretcher and looks at LILIOM He stretches his hand out to her She clasps it It is not quite dark yet Both of them can still be plainly seen]

Liliom [Raises himself with difficulty, speaks lightly at first, but later soberly, defiantly] Little—Julie—there's something—I want to tell you—like when you go to a restaurant—and you've finished eating—and it's time—to pay—then you have to count up everything—everything you owe—well—I beat you—not because I was mad at you—no—only because I can't bear to see anyone crying You always cried—on my account—and, well, you see,—I never learned a trade—what kind of a caretaker would I make? But anyhow—I wasn't going back to the carousel to fool with the girls No, I spit on them all—understand?

Julie Yes

Liliom And—as for Hollinger—he's good enough—Mrs Muskat can get along all right with him The jokes he tells are mine—and the people laugh when he tells them—but I don't care—I didn't give you anything—no home—not even the food you ate—but you don't understand—It's true I'm not much good—but I couldn't be a caretaker—and so I thought maybe it would be better over there—in America—do you see?

Julie Yes

Liliom I'm not asking—forgiveness—I don't do that—I don't Tell the baby—if you like

Julie Yes.

Liliom Tell the baby—I wasn't much good—but tell him—if you ever talk about me—tell him—I thought—perhaps—over in America—but that's no affair of yours I'm not asking forgiveness For my part the police can come now—If it's a boy—if it's a girl—Perhaps I'll see the Lord God today—Do you think I'll see Him?

Julie Yes

Liliom I'm not afraid—of the police Up There—if they'll only let me come up in front of the Lord God Himself—not like

down here where an officer stops you at the door If the carpenter asks you—yes—be his wife—marry him And the child—tell him he's his father—He'll believe you—won't he?

Julie Yes

Liliom When I beat you—I was right—you mustn't always think—you mustn't always be right—Liliom can be right once, too—It's all the same to me who was right—It's so dumb Nobody's right—but they all think they are right—A lot they know!

Julie Yes

Liliom Julie—come—hold my hand tight

Julie I'm holding it tight—all the time

Liliom Tighter, still tighter—I'm going

— [Pauses] Julie —

Julie Good-bye [LILIOM sinks slowly back and dies JULIE frees her hand The DOCTOR enters with the FIRST POLICEMAN]

Doctor. Good evening His wife?

Julie Yes, sir [Behind the DOCTOR and POLICEMAN enter MARIE, WOLF, MOTHER HOLLUNDER, YOUNG HOLLUNDER and MRS MUSKAT They remain respectfully at the doorway The DOCTOR bends over LILIOM and examines him]

Doctor A light, if you please [JULIE fetches a burning candle from the dark room The DOCTOR examines LILIOM briefly in the candle-light, then turns suddenly away] Have you pen and ink?

Wolf [Proffering a pen] A fountain-pen—American—

Doctor. [Takes a printed form from his pocket, speaks as he writes out the death-certificate at the little table] My poor woman, your husband is dead—there's nothing to be done for him—the good God will help him now—I'll leave this certificate with you You will give it to the people from the hospital when they come—I'll arrange for the body to be removed at once. [Rises] Please give me a towel and soap

Policeman I've got them for you out here, sir [Points to door at back]

Doctor God be with you, my good woman.

Julie Thank you, sir [The DOCTOR and POLICEMAN exit The others slowly draw nearer]

Marie Poor Julie May he rest in peace poor man, but as for you—please don't be

angry with me for saying it—but you're better off this way

*Mother Hollunder* He is better off, the poor fellow, and so are you

*Marie* Much better, Julie . . . you are young and one of these days some good man will come along Am I right?

*Wolf* She's right

*Marie* Julie, tell me, am I right?

*Julie* You are right, dear, you are very good

*Young Hollunder* There's a good man—the carpenter Oh, I can speak of it now He comes here every day on some excuse or other—and he never fails to ask for you

*Marie* A widower—with two children

*Mother Hollunder* He's better off, poor fellow—and so are you He was a bad man

*Marie* He wasn't good-hearted Was he, Wolf?

*Wolf* No, I must say, he really wasn't No, Lihom wasn't a good man A good man doesn't strike a woman

*Marie* Am I right? Tell me, Julie, am I right?

*Julie* You are right, dear

*Young Hollunder* It's really a good thing for her it happened

*Mother Hollunder* He's better off—and so is she

*Wolf* Now you have your freedom again How old are you?

*Julie* Eighteen

*Wolf* Eighteen A mere child! Am I right?

*Julie* You are right, Wolf You are kind.

*Young Hollunder.* Lucky for you it happened, isn't it?

*Julie* Yes

*Young Hollunder* All you had before was bad luck If it weren't for my mother you wouldn't have had a roof over your head or a bite to eat—and now Autumn's coming and Winter You couldn't have lived in this shack in the Winter time, could you?

*Marie* Certainly not! You'd have frozen like the birds in the fields Am I right, Julie?

*Julie* Yes, Marie

*Marie* A year from now you will have forgotten all about him, won't you?

*Julie* You are right, Marie

*Wolf* If you need anything, count on us.

We'll go now But tomorrow morning we'll be back Come, Marie God be with you [Offers JULIE his hand]

*Julie* God be with you

*Marie* [Embraces JULIE, weeping] It's the best thing that could have happened to you, Julie, the best thing

*Julie* Don't cry, Marie [MARIE and WOLF exit]

*Mother Hollunder* I'll make a little black coffee You haven't had a thing to eat today Then you'll come home with us [MOTHER HOLLUNDER and her son exit MRS MUSKAT comes over to JULIE]

*Mrs Muskat* Would you mind if I—looked at him?

*Julie* He used to work for you

*Mrs Muskat* [Contemplates the body; turns to JULIE] Won't you make up with me?

*Julie.* I wasn't angry with you

*Mrs Muskat* But you were Let's make it up

*Julie* [Raising her voice eagerly, almost triumphantly] I've nothing to make up with you

*Mrs Muskat* But I have with you Everyone says hard things against the poor dead boy—except us two You don't say he was bad

*Julie* [Raising her voice yet higher, this time on a defiant, wholly triumphant note] Yes, I do

*Mrs Muskat* I understand, my child But he beat me, too What does that matter? I've forgotten it

*Julie* [From now on answers her coldly, drily, without looking at her] That's your own affair

*Mrs Muskat.* If I can help you in any way—

*Julie* There's nothing I need

*Mrs Muskat* I still owe him two kronen, back pay

*Julie* You should have paid him

*Mrs Muskat* Now that the poor fellow is dead I thought perhaps it would be the same if I paid you

*Julie* I've nothing to do with it

*Mrs Muskat.* All right Please don't think I'm trying to force myself on you I stayed because we two are the only ones on earth who loved him That's why I thought we ought to stick together

*Julie.* No, thank you

Mrs Muskat Then you couldn't have loved him as I did.

Julie No

Mrs Muskat I loved him better

Julie Yes

Mrs Muskat Good-bye

Julie Good-bye [MRS MUSKAT exits JULIE puts the candle on the table near LILIOM's head, sits on the edge of the stretcher, looks into the dead man's face and caresses it tenderly] Sleep, Lihom, sleep—it's no business of hers—I never even told you—but now I'll tell you—now I'll tell you—you bad, quick-tempered, rough, unhappy, wicked—dear boy—sleep peacefully, Lihom—they can't understand how I feel—I can't even explain to you—not even to you—how I feel—you'd only laugh at me—but you can't hear me any more [Between tender motherliness and reproach, yet with great love in her voice] It was wicked of you to beat me—on the breast and on the head and face—but you're gone now—You treated me badly—that was wicked of you—but sleep peacefully, Lihom—you bad, bad boy, you—I love you—I never told you before—I was ashamed—but now I've told you—I love you Lihom—sleep—my boy—sleep [She rises, gets a Bible, sits down near the candle and reads softly to herself, so that, not the words, but an inarticulate murmur is heard. The CARPENTER enters at back]

Carpenter [Stands near the door; in the dimness of the room he can scarcely be seen] Miss Julie—

Julie [Without alarm] Who is that?

Carpenter [Very slowly] The carpenter

Julie What does the carpenter want?

Carpenter Can I be of help to you in any way? Shall I stay here with you?

Julie [Gratefully, but firmly] Don't stay, carpenter

Carpenter Shall I come back tomorrow?

Julie Not tomorrow, either

Carpenter Don't be offended, Miss Julie, but I'd like to know—you see, I'm not a young man any more—I have two children—and if I'm to come back any more—I'd like to know—if there's any use—

Julie No use, carpenter

Carpenter [As he exits] God be with you [JULIE resumes her reading FICSUR enters, sinks furtively sideways to the stretcher, looks at LILIOM, shakes his head

JULIE looks up from her reading FICSUR takes fright, sinks away from the stretcher, sits down at right, biting his nails JULIE rises FICSUR rises, too, and looks at her half fearfully With her piercing glance upon him he sinks to the doorway at back, where he pauses and speaks]

Ficsur The old woman asked me to tell you that coffee is ready, and you are to come in [JULIE goes to the kitchen door FICSUR withdraws until she has closed the door behind her Then he reappears in the doorway, stands on tiptoes, looks at LILIOM, then exits Now the body lies alone After a brief silence music is heard, distant at first, but gradually coming nearer It is very much like the music of the carousel, but slower, graver, more exalted The melody, too, is the same, yet the tempo is altered and contrapuntal measures of the thieves' song are intertwined in it Two men in black, with heavy sticks, soft black hats and black gloves, appear in the doorway at back and stride slowly into the room Their faces are beardless, marble white, grave and benign One stops in front of the stretcher, the other a pace to the right From above a dim violet light illuminates their faces]

The First [To LILIOM] Rise and come with us

The Second [Politely] You're under arrest

The First [Somewhat louder, but always in a gentle, low, resonant voice] Do you hear? Rise Don't you hear?

The Second We are the police

The First [Bends down, touches LILIOM's shoulder] Get up and come with us [LILIOM slowly sits up]

The Second Come along

The First [Paternaly] These people suppose that when they die all their difficulties are solved for them

The Second [Raising his voice sternly] That simply by thrusting a knife in your heart and making it stop beating you can leave your wife behind with a child in her womb—

The First It is not as simple as that

The Second Such things are not settled so easily

The First Come along You will have to give an account of yourself [As both bow their heads, he continues softly] We are

God's police [*An expression of glad relief lights upon LILKOM's face He rises from the stretcher*] Come

*The Second* You mortals don't get off quite as easy as that

*The First.* [*Softly*] Come [*LILKOM starts to walk ahead of them, then stops and looks at them*] The end is not as abrupt as that Your name is still spoken Your face is still remembered And what you said, and what you did, and what you failed to do—these are still remembered Remembered, too, are the manner of your glance, the ring of your voice, the clasp of your hand and how your step sounded—as long as one is left who remembers you, so long is the matter unended Before the end there is much to be undone Until you are quite forgotten, my son, you will not be finished with the earth—even though you are dead

*The Second.* [*Very gently*] Come [*The music begins again All three exit at back, LILKOM leading, the others following The stage is empty and quite dark save for the candle which burns by the stretcher, on which, in the shadows, the covers are so arranged that one cannot quite be sure that a body is not still lying The music dies out in the distance as if it had followed LILKOM and the two POLICEMEN. The candle flickers and goes out There is a brief interval of silence and total darkness before*]

## SCENE SIX

*SCENE—In the Beyond A whitewashed courtroom There is a green-topped table; behind it a bench Back center is a door with a bell over it Next to this door is a window through which can be seen a vista of rose-tinted clouds*

*Down right there is a grated iron door. Down left another door.*

*Two men are on the bench when the curtain rises One is richly, the other poorly dressed*

*From a great distance is heard a fanfare of trumpets playing the refrain of the thieves' song in slow, altered tempo*

*Passing the window at back appear LILKOM and the two POLICEMEN The bell rings*

*An old guard enters at right He is bald*

*and has a long white beard. He wears the conventional police uniform*

*He goes to the door at back, opens it, exchanges silent greetings with the two policemen and closes the door again*

*LILKOM looks wonderingly around*

*The First* [*To the old guard*] Announce us [*The guard exits at left*]

*Lilhom* Is this it?

*The Second* Yes, my son

*Lilhom* This is the police court?

*The Second* Yes, my son The part for suicide cases

*Lilhom* What happens here?

*The First* Here justice is done Sit down [*LILKOM sits next to the two men The two POLICEMEN stand silent near the table*]

*The Richly Dressed Man* [*Whispers*] Suicide, too?

*Lilhom* Yes

*The Richly Dressed Man* [*Points to the POORLY DRESSED MAN*] So's he [*Introducing himself*] My name is Reich

*The Poorly Dressed Man* [*Whispers, too*] My name is Stephan Kadar

[*LILKOM only looks at them*]

*The Poorly Dressed Man.* And you? What's your name?

*Lilhom* None of your business [*Both move a bit away from him*]

*The Poorly Dressed Man* I did it by jumping out of a window

*The Richly Dressed Man* I did it with a pistol—and you?

*Lilhom* With a knife [*They move a bit further away from him*]

*The Richly Dressed Man* A 'pistol is cleaner

*Lilhom* If I had the price of a pistol—

*The Second* Silence!

[*THE POLICE MAGISTRATE enters He has a long white beard, is bald, but only in profile can be seen on his head a single tuft of snow-white hair THE GUARD reenters behind him and sits on the bench with the dead men As THE MAGISTRATE enters, all rise, except LILKOM, who remains sulkily seated When THE MAGISTRATE sits down, so do the others*]

*The Guard* Yesterday's cases, your honor The numbers are entered in the docket

*The Magistrate* Number 16,472

*The First* [*Looks in his notebook,*

beckons THE RICHLY DRESSED MAN ]  
Stand up, please [THE RICHLY DRESSED  
MAN rises ]

The Magistrate Your name?

The Richly Dressed Man Doctor Reich

The Magistrate Age?

The Richly Dressed Man Forty-two,  
married, Jew

The Magistrate [With a gesture of dis-  
missal] Religion does not interest us here  
—why did you kill yourself?

The Richly Dressed Man On account of  
debts

The Magistrate What good did you do  
on earth?

The Richly Dressed Man I was a lawyer

The Magistrate [Coughs significantly ]  
Yes—we'll discuss that later For the pres-  
ent I shall only ask you Would you like  
to go back to earth once more before sun-  
rise? I advise you that you have the right  
to go if you choose Do you understand?

The Richly Dressed Man Yes, sir

The Magistrate He who takes his life is  
apt, in his haste and his excitement, to for-  
get something Is there anything important  
down there you have left undone? Some-  
thing to tell someone? Something to undo?

The Richly Dressed Man My debts—

The Magistrate They do not matter here  
Here we are concerned only with the affairs  
of the soul

The Richly Dressed Man Then—if you  
please—when I left—the house—my young-  
est son, Oscar—was asleep I didn't trust  
myself to wake him—and bid him good-  
bye I would have liked—to kiss him good-  
bye

The Magistrate [To the SECOND] You  
will take Dr Reich back and let him kiss  
his son Oscar

The Second Come with me, please

The Richly Dressed Man [To THE  
MAGISTRATE] I thank you [He bows and  
exits at back with THE SECOND]

The Magistrate [After making an entry  
in the docket] Number 16,473

The First [Looks in his notebook, then  
beckons LILIOM] Stand up

Lilhom You said please to him [He  
rises]

The Magistrate Your name?

Lilhom Lilhom

The Magistrate. Isn't that your nick-  
name?

Lilhom Yes

The Magistrate What is your right  
name?

Lilhom Andreas

The Magistrate And your last name?

Lilhom Zavoczki—after my mother

The Magistrate Your age?

Lilhom Twenty-four

The Magistrate What good did you do  
on earth? [LILIOM is silent] Why did you  
take your life? [LILIOM does not answer]  
THE MAGISTRATE addresses THE FIRST  
Take that knife away from him [THE  
FIRST does so] It will be returned to you,  
if you go back to earth

Lilhom Do I go back to earth again?

The Magistrate Just answer my ques-  
tions

Lilhom I wasn't answering then, I was  
asking if—

The Magistrate You don't ask questions  
here You only answer Only answer,  
Andreas Zavoczki! I ask you whether there  
is anything on earth you neglected to ac-  
complish? Anything down there you would  
like to do?

Lilhom Yes

The Magistrate What is it?

Lilhom I'd like to break Ficsur's head  
for him

The Magistrate Punishment is our office  
Is there nothing else on earth you'd like  
to do?

Lilhom I don't know—I guess, as long as  
I'm here, I'll not go back

The Magistrate [To THE FIRST] Note  
that He waives his right [LILIOM starts  
back to the bench] Stay where you are  
You are aware that you left your wife with-  
out food or shelter?

Lilhom Yes

The Magistrate Don't you regret it?

Lilhom No

The Magistrate You are aware that your  
wife is pregnant, and that in six months a  
child will be born?

Lilhom I know

The Magistrate And that the child, too,  
will be without food or shelter? Do you  
regret that?

Lilhom As long as I won't be there,  
what's it got to do with me?

The Magistrate Don't try to deceive us,

Andreas Zavoczki We see through you as through a pane of glass

*Lilom* If you see so much, what do you want to ask me for? Why don't you let me rest—in peace?

*The Magistrate* First you must earn your rest

*Lilom* I want—only—to sleep

*The Magistrate* Your obstinacy won't help you Here patience is endless as time We can wait

*Lilom* Can I ask something—I'd like to know—if Your Honor will tell me—whether the baby will be a boy or a girl

*The Magistrate* You shall see that for yourself

*Lilom* [*Excitedly*] I'll see the baby?

*The Magistrate* When you do it won't be a baby any more But we haven't reached that question yet

*Lilom* I'll see it?

*The Magistrate* Again I ask you Do you not regret that you deserted your wife and child, that you were a bad husband, a bad father?

*Lilom* A bad husband?

*The Magistrate* Yes

*Lilom* And a bad father?

*The Magistrate* That, too

*Lilom* I couldn't get work—and I couldn't bear to see Julie—all the time—all the time—

*The Magistrate* Weeping! Why are you ashamed to say it? You couldn't bear to see her weeping Why are you afraid of that word? And why are you ashamed that you loved her?

*Lilom* [*Shrugs his shoulders*] Who's ashamed? But I couldn't bear to see her—and that's why I was bad to her You see, it wouldn't do to go back to the carousel—and Ficsur came along with his talk about—that other thing—and all of a sudden it happened, I don't know how The police and the Jew with the pistol—and there I stood—and I'd lost the money playing cards—and I didn't want to be put in prison [*Demanding justification*] Maybe I was wrong not to go out and steal when there was nothing to eat in the house? Should I have gone out to steal for Julie?

*The Magistrate* [*Emphatically*] Yes

*Lilom* [*After an astounded pause*] The police down there never said that

*The Magistrate* You beat that poor, frail

girl, you beat her because she loved you How could you do that?

*Lilom* We argued with each other—she said this and I said that—and because she was right I couldn't answer her—and I got mad—and the anger rose up in me—until it reached here [*points to his throat*—and then I beat her

*The Magistrate* Are you sorry?

*Lilom* [*Shakes his head, but cannot utter the word "no", continues softly*] When I touched her slender throat—then—if you like—you might say— [*Falters, looks embarrassed at THE MAGISTRATE*]

*The Magistrate* [*Confidently expectant*] Are you sorry?

*Lilom* [*With a stare*] I'm not sorry for anything

*The Magistrate.* Lilom, Lilom, it will be difficult to help you

*Lilom* I'm not asking any help

*The Magistrate* You were offered employment as a caretaker on Arader Street [*To THE FIRST*] Where is that entered?

*The First* In the small docket [*Hands him the open book* *THE MAGISTRATE looks in it*]

*The Magistrate* Rooms, kitchen, quarterly wages, the privilege of keeping poultry Why didn't you accept it?

*Lilom* I'm not a caretaker I'm no good at caretaking To be a caretaker—you have to be a caretaker—

*The Magistrate* If I said to you now Lilom, go back on your stretcher Tomorrow morning you will arise alive and well again Would you be a caretaker then?

*Lilom* No

*The Magistrate* Why not?

*Lilom* Because—because that's just why I died

*The Magistrate* That is not true, my son You died because you loved little Julie and the child she is bearing under her heart.

*Lilom* No

*The Magistrate* Look me in the eye

*Lilom* [*Looks him in the eye*] No

*The Magistrate* [*Stroking his beard*] Lilom, Lilom, if it were not for our Heavenly patience— Go back to your seat Number 16,474

*The First* [*Looks in his notebook*] Stephan Kadar [*THE POORLY DRESSED MAN rises*]

*The Magistrate* You came out today?



*The Poorly Dressed Man* Today

*The Magistrate* [Indicating the crimson sea of clouds] How long were you in there?

*The Poorly Dressed Man* Thirteen years

*The Magistrate* Officer, you went to earth with him?

*The First* Yes, sir

*The Magistrate* Stephan Kadar, after thirteen years of purification by fire you returned to earth to give proof that your soul had been burned clean What good deed did you perform?

*The Poorly Dressed Man* When I came to the village and looked in the window of our cottage I saw my poor little orphans sleeping peacefully But it was raining and the rain beat into the room through a hole in the roof So I went and fixed the roof so it wouldn't rain in any more My hammering woke them up and they were afraid But their mother came in to them and comforted them She said to them "Don't cry! It's your poor, dear father hammering up there He's come back from the other world to fix the roof for us"

*The Magistrate* Officer?

*The First* That's what happened

*The Magistrate* Stephan Kadar, you have done a good deed What you did will be written in books to gladden the hearts of children who read them [Indicates the door at left] The door is open to you The eternal light awaits you [THE FIRST escorts THE POORLY DRESSED MAN out at left with great deference] Lihom! [LILIOM rises] You have heard?

*Lihom* Yes

*The Magistrate* When this man first appeared before us he was as stubborn as you But now he has purified himself and withstood the test He has done a good deed

*Lihom* What's he done, anyhow? Any roofer can fix a roof It's much harder to be a barker in an amusement park

*The Magistrate* Lihom, you shall remain for sixteen years in the crimson fire until your child is full grown By that time your pride and your stubbornness will have been burnt out of you And when your daughter—

*Lihom* My daughter!

*The Magistrate* When your daughter has reached the age of sixteen—[LILIOM bows his head, covers his eyes with his

hands, and to keep from weeping laughs defiantly, sadly]

*The Magistrate* When your daughter has reached the age of sixteen you will be sent for one day back to earth

*Lihom* Me?

*The Magistrate* Yes—just as you may have read in the legends of how the dead reappear on earth for a time

*Lihom* I never believed them

*The Magistrate* Now you see they are true You will go back to earth one day to show how far the purification of your soul has progressed

*Lihom* Then I must show that I can do—like when you apply for a job—as a coachman?

*The Magistrate* Yes—it is a test

*Lihom* And will I be told what I have to do?

*The Magistrate* No

*Lihom* How will I know, then?

*The Magistrate* You must decide that for yourself That's what you burn sixteen years for And if you do something good, something splendid for your child, then—

*Lihom* [Laughs sadly] Then? [All stand up and bow their heads reverently There is a pause] Then?

*The Magistrate* Now I'll bid you farewell, Lihom Sixteen years and a day shall pass before I see you again When you have returned from earth you will come up before me again Take heed and think well of some good deed to do for your child On that will depend which door shall be opened to you up here Now go, Lihom [He exits at left THE GUARD stands at attention There is a pause]

*The First* [Approaches LILIOM] Come along, my son [He goes to the door at right, pulls open the bolt and waits]

*Lihom* [To the old GUARD, softly] Say, officer

*The Guard* What do you want?

*Lihom* Please—can I get—have you got—?

*The Guard* What?

*Lihom* [Whispers] A cigarette?

[The old GUARD stares at him, goes a few paces to the left, shakes his head disapprovingly Then his expression softens He takes a cigarette from his pocket and, crossing to LILIOM—who has gone



*over to the door at right—gives him the cigarette The First throws open the door. An intense rose-colored light streams in The glow of it is so strong that it blinds LILION and he takes a step backward and bows his head and covers his eyes with his hand before he steps forward into the light ]*

### SCENE SEVEN

*SCENE—Sixteen years later. A small, tumble-down house on a bare, unenclosed plot of ground Before the house is a tiny garden enclosed by a hip-high hedge*

*At back a wooden fence crosses the stage, in the center of it is a door large enough to admit a wagon Beyond the fence is a view of a suburban street which blends into a broad vista of tilled fields*

*It is a bright Sunday in Spring*

*In the garden a table for two is laid*

*JULIE, her daughter LOUISE, WOLF and MARIE are discovered in the garden WOLF is prosperously dressed, MARIE somewhat elaborately, with a huge hat.*

*Julie You could stay for lunch.*

*Marie Impossible, dear Since he became the proprietor of the Café Sorrento, Wolf simply has to be there all the time*

*Julie But you needn't stay there all day, too*

*Marie Oh, yes I sit near the cashier's cage, read the papers, keep an eye on the waiters and drink in the bustle and excitement of the great city*

*Julie And what about the children?*

*Marie You know what modern families are like Parents scarcely ever see their children these days The four girls are with their governess, the three boys with their tutor*

*Louise Auntie, dear, do stay and eat with us*

*Marie [Importantly] Impossible today, dear child, impossible Perhaps some other time Come, Mr Berfeld*

*Julie Since when do you call your husband mister?*

*Wolf I'd rather she did, dear lady When we used to be very familiar we quarreled*

*all the time Now we are formal with each other and get along like society folk I kiss your hand, dear lady*

*Julie Good-bye, Wolf.*

*Marie Adieu, my dear. [They embrace] Adieu, my dear child*

*Louise Good-bye, Aunt Marie. Good-bye, Uncle Wolf*

*[WOLF and MARIE exit]*

*Julie You can get the soup now, Louise dear*

*[LOUISE goes into the house and reenters with the soup They sit at the table]*

*Louise Mother, is it true we're not going to work at the jute factory any more?*

*Julie Yes, dear*

*Louise Where then?*

*Julie Uncle Wolf has gotten us a place in a big establishment where they make all kinds of fittings for cafés We're to make big curtains, you know, the kind they hang in the windows, with lettering on them*

*Louise It'll be nicer there than at the jute factory*

*Julie Yes, dear The work isn't as dirty and pays better, too A poor widow like your mother is lucky to get it*

*[They eat LILION and the two HEAVENLY POLICEMEN appear in the big doorway at back The POLICEMEN pass slowly by LILION stands there alone a moment, then comes slowly down and pauses at the opening of the hedge He is dressed as he was on the day of his death He is very pale, but otherwise unaltered JULIE, at the table, has her back to him LOUISE sits facing the audience]*

*Lilhom Good day*

*Louise Good day*

*Julie Another beggar! What is it you want, my poor man?*

*Lilhom Nothing*

*Julie We have no money to give, but if you care for a plate of soup— LOUISE goes into the house] Have you come far today?*

*Lilhom Yes—very far.*

*Julie Are you tired?*

*Lilhom Very tired*

*Julie. Over there at the gate is a stone.*

Sit down and rest My daughter is bringing you the soup

[LOUISE comes out of the house]

Lilhom Is that your daughter?

Julie Yes

Lilhom [To LOUISE] You are the daughter?

Louise Yes, sir

Lilhom A fine, healthy girl [Takes the soup plate from her with one hand, while with the other he touches her arm LOUISE draws back quickly]

Louise [Crosses to JULIE] Mother!

Julie What, my child?

Louise The man tried to take me by the arm

Julie Nonsense! You only imagined it, dear The poor, hungry man has other things to think about than fooling with young girls Sit down and eat your soup

[They eat]

Lilhom [Eats, too, but keeps looking at them] You work at the factory, eh?

Julie Yes

Lilhom Your daughter, too?

Louise Yes

Lilhom And your husband?

Julie [After a pause] I have no husband I'm a widow

Lilhom A widow?

Julie Yes

Lilhom Your husband—I suppose he's been dead a long time [JULIE does not answer] I say—has your husband been dead a long time?

Julie A long time

Lilhom What did he die of?

[JULIE is silent]

Louise No one knows He went to America to work and he died there—in the hospital Poor father, I never knew him

Lilhom He went to America?

Louise Yes, before I was born.

Lilhom To America?

Julie Why do you ask so many questions? Did you know him, perhaps?

Lilhom [Puts the plate down] Heaven knows! I've known so many people Maybe I knew him, too

Julie Well, if you knew him, leave him and us in peace with your questions He went to America and died there That's all there is to tell

Lilhom All right All right Don't be angry with me I didn't mean any harm  
[There is a pause]

Louise My father was a very handsome man

Julie Don't talk so much

Louise Did I say anything—?

Lilhom Surely the little orphan can say that about her father

Louise My father could juggle so beautifully with three ivory balls that people used to advise him to go on the stage

Julie Who told you that?

Louise Uncle Wolf

Lilhom Who is that?

Louise Mr Wolf Beifeld, who owns the Café Sorrento

Lilhom The one who used to be a porter?

Julie [Astonished] Do you know him, too? It seems that you know all Budapest

Lilhom Wolf Beifeld is a long way from being all Budapest But I do know a lot of people Why shouldn't I know Wolf Beifeld?

Louise He was a friend of my father

Julie He was not his friend No one was

Lilhom You speak of your husband so sternly

Julie What's that to you? Doesn't it suit you? I can speak of my husband any way I like It's nobody's business but mine

Lilhom Certainly, certainly—it's your own business [Takes up his soup plate again All three eat]

Louise [To JULIE] Perhaps he knew father, too

Julie Ask him, if you like

Louise [Crosses to LILIOM He stands up] Did you know my father? [LILIOM nods LOUISE addresses her mother] Yes, he knew him

Julie [Rises] You knew Andreas Zavoczki?

Lilhom Lilhom? Yes

Louise Was he really a very handsome man?

Lilhom I wouldn't exactly say handsome

Louise [Confidently] But he was an awfully good man, wasn't he?

Lilhom He wasn't so good, either As far as I know he was what they called a clown, a barker in a carousel

Louise [Pleased] Did he tell funny jokes?

*Lahom* Lots of 'em And he sang funny songs, too

*Louse* In the carousel?

*Lahom* Yes—but he was something of a bully, too He'd fight anyone. He even hit your dear little mother.

*Julie* That's a lie.

*Lahom* It's true

*Julie* Aren't you ashamed to tell the child such awful things about her father? Get out of here, you shameless liar Eats our soup and our bread and has the impudence to slander our dead!

*Lahom* I didn't mean—I——

*Julie* What right have you to tell lies to the child? Take that plate, Louise, and let him be on his way If he wasn't such a hungry-looking beggar, I'd put him out myself

[*LOUISE takes the plate out of his hand*]

*Lahom* So, he didn't hit you?

*Julie*. No, never He was always good to me

*Louse* [*Whispers*] Did he tell funny stories, too?

*Lahom* Yes, and such funny ones

*Julie* Don't speak to him any more In God's name, go

*Louse* In God's name

[*JULIE resumes her seat at the table and eats*]

*Lahom* If you please, Miss—I have a pack of cards in my pocket And if you like, I'll show you some tricks that'll make you split your sides laughing [*LOUISE holds LILLOM's plate in her left hand With her right she reaches out and holds the garden gate shut*] Let me in, just a little way, Miss, and I'll do the tricks for you

*Louse* Go, in God's name, and let us be Why are you making those ugly faces?

*Lahom* Don't chase me away, Miss, let me come in for just a minute—just for a minute—just long enough to let me show you something pretty, something wonderful [*Opens the gate*] Miss, I've something to give you

[*Takes from his pocket a big red handkerchief in which is wrapped a glittering star from Heaven He looks furtively about him to make sure that the Police are not watching*]

*Louse*. What's that?

*Lahom* Pst! A star!

[*With a gesture he indicates that he has stolen it out of the sky*]

*Julie* [*Sternly*] Don't take anything from him He's probably stolen it somewhere [*To LILLOM*] In God's name, be off with you

*Louse*. Yes, be off with you. Be off. [*She slams the gate*]

*Lahom* Miss—please, Miss—I've got to do something good—or—do something good—a good deed——

*Louse* [*Pointing with her right hand*] That's the way out.

*Lahom* Miss——

*Louse* Get out!

*Lahom* Miss! [*Looks up at her suddenly and slaps her extended hand, so that the slap resounds loudly*]

*Louse* Mother! [*Looks dazedly at LILLOM, who bows his head dismayed, forlorn JULIE rises and looks at LILLOM in astonishment There is a long pause*]

*Julie* [*Comes over to them slowly*] What's the matter here?

*Louse* [*Bewildered, does not take her eyes off LILLOM*] Mother—the man—he hit me—on the hand—hard—I heard the sound of it—but it didn't hurt—mother—it didn't hurt—it was like a caress—as if he had just touched my hand tenderly

[*She hides behind JULIE LILLOM sulkily raises his head and looks at JULIE*]

*Julie* [*Softly*] Go, my child. Go into the house Go

*Louse* [*Going*] But mother—I'm afraid—it sounded so loud—— [*Weepingly*] And it didn't hurt at all—just as if he'd—kissed my hand instead—mother [*She hides her face*]

*Julie* Go in, my child, go in

[*LOUISE goes slowly into the house JULIE watches her until she has disappeared, then turns slowly to LILLOM*]

*Julie* You struck my child.

*Lahom* Yes—I struck her

*Julie* Is that what you came for, to strike my child?

*Lahom* No—I didn't come for that—but I did strike her—and now I'm going back

*Julie* In the name of the Lord Jesus, who are you?

*Lahom* [*Simply*] A poor, tired beggar

who came a long way and who was hungry  
And I took your soup and bread and I  
struck your child Are you angry with me?

*Julie* [*Her hand on her heart, fearfully, wonderingly*] Jesus protect me—I don't understand it—I'm not angry—not angry at all—

[*LILIOM goes to the doorway and leans against the doorpost, his back to the audience JULIE goes to the table and sits*]

*Julie* Louse! [*LOUISE comes out of the house*] Sit down, dear, we'll finish eating

*Louse* Has he gone?

*Julie* Yes [*They are both seated at the table LOUISE, her head in her hands, is staring into space*] Why don't you eat, dear?

*Louse* What has happened, mother?

*Julie* Nothing, my child

[*The HEAVENLY POLICEMEN appear outside LILIOM walks slowly off at left The FIRST POLICEMAN makes a deploring gesture Both shake their heads deploringly and follow LILIOM slowly off at left*]

*Louse* Mother, dear, why won't you tell me?

*Julie* What is there to tell you, child? Nothing has happened We were peacefully eating, and a beggar came who talked of bygone days, and then I thought of your father

*Louse* My father?

*Julie* Your father—Liliom

[*There is a pause*]

*Louse* Mother—tell me—has it ever happened to you—has anyone ever hit you—without hurting you in the least?

*Julie* Yes, my child It has happened to me, too [There is a pause]

*Louse* Is it possible for someone to hit you—hard like that—real loud and hard—and not hurt you at all?

*Julie* It is possible, dear—that someone may beat you and beat you and beat you,—and not hurt you at all—

[*There is a pause Nearby an organ-grinder has stopped The music of his organ begins*]

THE END



THE RATS  
(DIE RATTEN)

By GERHART HAUPTMANN

*Translated from the German by LUDWIG LEWISOHN*

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## GERHART HAUPTMANN AND HIS PLAYS

GERHART HAUPTMANN, the greatest dramatist of modern Germany, and the author of *The Rats*, was born in the province of Obersalzbrunn, in Silesia (then a portion of Germany) in 1862. His first wish was to be a sculptor, and he studied art in the German cities of Breslau and Jena and also in Italy. After he settled in Berlin, he became associated with that remarkable experimental theatre known as "The Free Stage," a counterpart of Antoine's Théâtre Libre in Paris. In 1889 the Free Stage produced his play *Before Dawn*, which created a sensation, and, in 1892, his naturalistic tragedy *The Weavers*, which established his reputation. Since that time Hauptmann has dominated the German stage, and has become one of the pervading influences in modern drama.

Although Hauptmann is usually labelled a "naturalist," his thirty plays include a variety of forms, not only naturalistic tragedies, such as *The Rats* and *The Weavers*, and naturalistic comedies such as *The Beaver Coat*, but also historical plays, in which, like Strindberg and Shaw, he applied the principles of modern psychology to old material, such as *Charlemagne's Hostage*, fantasies, such as *And Pippa Dances*, dream plays, such as *Hannele*, and fairy plays, such as the allegorical dramatic poem *The Sunken Bell*. But whatever his method, it is always dictated by the inner necessities of his subject-matter. In this light, it is unjust to accuse Hauptmann of never having found himself—of having tried many methods without pursuing any one of them to its consummation.

Despite his fine achievements in various forms, Hauptmann is most widely known as a naturalist, and for good reason. It is true that he was not the very first to use the naturalistic method in the drama. Henri Becque in France had begun the movement, Tolstoi in Russia had written naturalistic plays, for naturalism was indigenous to Russia. But Hauptmann consciously carried the movement further, and achieved in it larger results. It was the object of naturalism to bring the drama back to reality and truth, and to evolve a technique that should be consonant with the subject-matter.

In carrying out these principles Hauptmann created a method that discards traditional artifices and subordinates plot invention to the portrayal of character. In his capacity simply as a naturalist, he selected his material with care and remoulded it into a shape that represents human beings in the guise of a product of the two great forces, heredity and environment. He often chose untutored persons as his subjects, partly, perhaps, because such persons more clearly show the operation of these forces, and also, as he himself stated, because he was determined to demonstrate the worth of common life as subject-matter even for tragedy. Although naturalism is now often referred to as an outworn method, such naturalism as Hauptmann's can never be out of date: it will be appropriate whenever the dramatist treats material that naturally dictates such a method of expression.

*The Rats*, although not so well known as *The Weavers*, shares the fine qualities of that play and is characteristic of Hauptmann's practice. Both its strength and its weakness are obvious. In one light it is a propaganda play, in which Hauptmann attempts to vindicate his contention that the life of common persons furnishes matter as worthy of tragic treatment as the life of the great. To achieve this purpose he introduces, as a contrast to the major plot, a minor plot in which the old idea of tragedy is expounded by one of the old school. Hence, the play is, as Lewisohn states, "a naturalistic tragedy and, at the same time, its criticism and defence." But, although such an ill-assorted union of plots was doubtless essential to Hauptmann's purpose, the play fails to fuse successfully its two plots into one organic whole, and insofar fails to be a perfect work of art. But simply as a naturalistic tragedy of lowly life, yet universal in its humanity, the major plot, which has for its protagonist Mrs. John, is so superb in its power that it actually triumphs over the structural weakness of the play as a whole.

The first production of *The Rats* was given in Berlin in 1911. Apparently, the play has never been produced in either England or America. Hauptmann himself, after complacently accepting the adoration of Adolf Hitler and the Nazis, died in 1946.



## CHARACTERS

HARRO HASSENREUTER, *formerly a theatrical  
manager*

MRS HARRO HASSENREUTER

WALBURGA, *their daughter*

PASTOR SPITTA

ERICH SPITTA, *postulant for Holy Orders,  
his son*

ALICE RUTTERBUSCH, *actress*

NATHANAEL JETTEL, *court actor*

KAFFERSTEIN, } *Pupils of HASSENREUTER*  
DR KEGEL, }

JOHN, *foreman-mason*

MRS JOHN

BRUNO MECHELKE, *her brother*

PAULINE PIPERCARCKA, *a servant girl*

MRS SIDONIE KNOBBE

SELMA, *her daughter*

QUAQUARO, *house-steward*

MRS KIELBACKE

POLICEMAN SCHIERKE

TWO INFANTS

*The action takes place in Berlin at the present day*

# THE RATS

## ACT ONE

The attic of a former cavalry barracks in Berlin. A windowless room that receives all its light from a lamp which burns suspended over a round table. From the back wall opens a straight passage which connects the room with the outer door—a door with iron hasps and a primitive signal bell which any one desiring to enter rings by means of a bell rope. A door in the right wall leads to an adjoining room, one in the left wall leads to the stairs into the loft immediately under the roof. Into this store room, as well as into the space visible to the spectator, the former theatrical manager, HARRO HASSENREUTER, has gathered his collection of properties. In the prevalent gloom it is difficult to decide whether the place is the armour room of an old castle, a museum of antiquities or the shop of a costumer. Stands with helmets and breast-plates are put up on either side of the passage, a row of similar stands almost covers the two sides of the front room. The stairs wind upward between two mailed figures. At the head of the stairs is a wooden trap-door. In the left foreground, against the wall, is a high desk. Ink, pens, old ledgers, a tall stool, as well as several chairs with tall backs and the round table make it clear that the room serves the purposes of an office. On the table is a decanter for water and several glasses, above the desk hang a number of photographs. These photographs represent HASSENREUTER in the part of Karl Moor (in Schiller's "Robbers"), as well as in a number of other parts. One of the mailed dummies wears a huge laurel wreath about its neck. The laurel wreath is tied with a ribbon which bears, in gilt letters, the following inscription "To our gifted manager Hassenreuter, from his grateful colleagues." A series of enormous red bows shows the inscriptions "To the inspired presenter of Karl Moor. To the incomparable, unforgettable Karl Moor" etc., etc. The room is utilised as far as its space will permit for the storing of

costumes. Wherever possible, German, Spanish and English garments of every age hang on hooks. Swedish riding boots, Spanish rapiers and German broadswords are scattered about. The door to the left bears the legend Library. The whole room displays picturesque disorder. Trumpery of all kinds—cups, goblets, cups—is scattered about. It is Sunday toward the end of May.

At the table in the middle of the room are sitting, Mrs JOHN (between thirty-five and forty) and a very young servant girl, PAULINE PIFFRANCCKA. PAULINE, vulgarly overdressed—jacket, hat, sunshade—sits straight upright. Her pretty, round little face shows signs of long weeping. Her figure betrays the fact that she is approaching motherhood. She draws letters on the floor with the end of her sunshade.

Mrs John Well, sure now! That's right! That's what I says, Pauline.

Pauline All right. So I'm goin' to Schlachtensee or to Halensee. I gotta go and see if I c'n meet him!

[She dries her tears and is about to rise.]

Mrs John [Prevents PAULINE from getting up.] Pauline! For God's sake don't you be doin' that! Not that there, for nothin' in the world! That don't do nothin' but raise a row and cost money an' don't bring you in nothin'. Look at the condition you're in. An' that way you want to go an' run after that there low lived feller?

Pauline Then my landlady c'n wait an' wait for me to-day. I'll jump into the Landwehr canal an' drown myself.

Mrs John Pauline! An' what for? What for, I'd like to know? Now you just listen to me for a speck of a minute, just for God's sake, for the teeniest speck of one an' pay attention to what I'm goin' to propose to you! You know yourself how I says to you, out on Alexander square, right by the chronometer—says I to you right out, as I was comin' out o' the market an' sees your condition with half an eye. He don't want to acknowledge nothin', eh? That's

what I axed you right out!—That happens to many gals here, to all of 'em—to millions! An' then I says to you . . . what did I say? Come along, I says, an' I'll help you!

*Pauline* O' course, I don't never dare to show myself at home lookin' this way. Mother, she'd cry it out at the first look. An' father, he'd knock my head against the wall an' throw me out in the street. An' I ain't got no more money left neither—nothin' but just two pieces o' gold that I got sewed up in the linin' o' my jacket. That feller didn't leave me no crown an' he didn't leave me no penny.

*Mrs John* Miss, my husband, he's a foreman-mason. I just wants you to pay attention just for heaven's sake, pay attention to the propositions that I'm goin' to make to you. They'll help us both. You'll be helped out an' the same way I'll be. An' what's more, Paul, that's my husband, he'll be helped, because he'd like, for all the world, to have a child, an' our only one, little Adelbert, he went an' died o' the croup. Your child'll be as well taken care of as an own child. Then you c'n go an' you c'n look up your sweetheart an' you c'n go back into service an' home to your people, an' the child is well off, an' nobody in the world don't need to know nothin'.

*Pauline* I'll do it just outa spite—that's what! An' drown myself! [*She rises*] An' a note, a note, I'll leave in my jacket, like this. You drove your Pauline to her death with your cursed meanness! An' then I'll put down his name in full. Alois Theophil Brunner, instrument-maker. Then he c'n see how he'll get along in the world with the murder o' me on his conscience.

*Mrs John* Wait a minute, Miss! I gotta unlock the door first.

[*MRS JOHN acts as though she were about to conduct PAULINE to the door*]

[*Before the two women reach the passage, BRUNO MECHELKE enters with slow and suspicious demeanour by the door at the left and remains standing in the room. BRUNO is short rather than tall, but with a powerful bull's neck and athletic shoulders. His forehead is low and receding, his close-clipped hair like a brush,*

*his skull round and small. His face is brutal and his left nostril has been ripped open sometime and imperfectly healed. The fellow is about nineteen years old. He bends forward, and his great, lumpish hands are joined to muscular arms. The pupils of his eyes are small, black and piercing. He is trying to repair a rat trap*]

[*BRUNO whistles to his sister as he would to a dog*]

*Mrs John* I'm comin' now, Bruno! What d'you want?

*Bruno* [*Apparently absorbed by the trap*] Thought I was goin' to put up traps here.

*Mrs John* Did you put the bacon in? [*To PAULINE*] It's only my brother. Don't be scared, Miss.

*Bruno* [*As before*] I seen the Emperor William to-day. I marched along wi' the guard.

*Mrs John* [*To PAULINE, who stands fearful and moveless in BRUNO's presence*] 'Tain't nothin' but my brother. You c'n stay—[*To BRUNO*] Boy, what're you lookin' that way for again? The young lady is fair scared o' you.

*Bruno* [*As before, without looking up*] Brrr-rr-rr! I'm a ghost.

*Mrs John* Hurry an' go up in the loft an' set your traps.

*Bruno* [*Slowly approaching the table*] Aw, that business ain't no good 'cept to starve on! When I goes to sell matches, I gets more outa it.

*Pauline* Good-bye, Mrs John.

*Mrs John* [*Raging at her brother*] Are you goin' to leave me alone?

*Bruno* [*Knuckling under*] Aw, don't go on so. I'm leavin'.

[*Obediently he withdraws into the adjoining room. MRS JOHN locks the door behind him with a determined gesture*]

*Pauline* That's a feller I wouldn't like to meet in the Tiergarten. Not by night an' not by day neither.

*Mrs John* If I sets Bruno on anyone an' he gets at him, God help him!

*Pauline* Good-bye. I don't like this here place. If you wants to see me again, Mrs John, I'd rather meet you at a bench on the Kreuzberg.

Mrs John Pauline, I brought up Bruno with sorrow and trouble by day an' by night An' I'll be twenty times better to your child So when it's born, Pauline, I'll take it, an' I swears to you by my father an' mother what died in the Lord an' what I goes to visit the graves of out in Rudersdorf one Sunday a year an' puts candles on 'em an' don' let nobody keep me back—I swears to you that little crittur'll live on the fat o' the land just like a born prince nor a born princess couldn't be treated no better

Pauline I'm goin' and with my last penny I'm goin' to buy vitriol—I don't care who it hits! An' I'll throw it in the face o' the wench that he goes with I don't care who it hits right in the middle o' the mug I don't care! It c'n burn up his fine-lookin' phiz! I don't care! It c'n burn off his beard an' burn out his eyes if he goes with other women! What did he do? Cheated me! Ruined me! Took my money! Robbed me o' my honour! That's what the damn' dog did—seduced me an' lied to me an' left me an' kicked me out into the world! I don't care who it hits! I wants him to be blind! I wants the stuff to burn his nose offa his face! I wants it to burn him offa the earth!

Mrs John Pauline, as I hopes to be happy hereafter, I tells you, from the minute where that there little one is born it's goin' to be treated like . . . well, I don't know what! as if it was born to be put in silks an' in satins All you gotta do is to have some confidence—that's what! You just say Yes I got it all figgered out It c'n be done, it c'n be done—that's what I tells you! An' no doctor an' no police an' no landlady don't has to know nothin' An' then, first of all, you gets paid a hundred an' twenty crowns what I saved scrubbin' an' charrin' here for manager Hassenreuter

Pauline I might strangle it when it's born, rather'n sell it!

Mrs John Who's talkin' about sellin'?

Pauline Look at the frights an' the misery I've stood from October las' to this very day My intended gives me the go; my landlady puts me out! They gives me notice at a lodgin's What does I do that I has to be despised an' cursed an' kicked aroun'?

Mrs John That's what I says That's

cause the devil is still gettin' the better of our Lord Jesus

[Unnoticed and busy with the trap as before BRUNO has quietly re-entered by the door]

Bruno [With a strange intonation, sharply and yet carelessly] Lamps!

Pauline That feller scares me. Lemme go!

Mrs John. [Makes violently for BRUNO] Is you goin' to go where you belongs? I told you I'd call you!

Bruno [In the same tone as before] Well, Jette, I jus' said Lamps!

Mrs John Are you crazy? What's the meanin' o' that—lamps?

Bruno Ain't that a ringin' o' the front bell?

Mrs John [Is frightened, listens and restrains PAULINE, who makes a motion to go] Sh, Miss, wait! Just wait one little minute!

[BRUNO continues whistling as the two women stop to listen]

Mrs John [Softly and in a frightened tone to BRUNO] I don't hear nothin'!

Bruno You ol' dried up piece! You better go an' get another pair o' ears!

Mrs John That'd be the first time in all the three months that the manager'd be comin' in when it's Sunday

Bruno If that there theayter feller comes, he c'n engage me right on the spot

Mrs John [Violently] Don't talk rot!

Bruno [Grinning at PAULINE] Maybe you don't believe it, Miss, but I went an' took the clown's hoss at Schumann's circus aroun' the ring three times Them's the kind o' things I does. An' is I goin' to be scared?

Pauline [Seeming to notice for the first time the fantastic strangeness of the place in which she finds herself Frightened and genuinely perturbed] Mother o' God, what kind o' place is this?

Mrs John Whoever c'n that be?

Bruno 'Tain't the manager, Jette! More like it's a spout what's drippin'!

Mrs John Miss, you be so kind an' go for two minutes, if you don't mind, up into this here loft Maybe somebody's comin' that just wants some information

[In her growing terror PAULINE does as she is asked to do She clambers up the stairs to the loft, the trap-door being open Mrs

JOHN *has taken up a position in which she can, at need, hide PAULINE from anyone entering the room*]

[PAULINE disappears. MRS JOHN and BRUNO remain alone]

Bruno What business has you with that pious mug?

Mrs John That ain't none o' your business, y'understan'?

Bruno I was just axin' 'cause you was so careful that nobody should see her. Otherwise I don't know's I gives a damn.

Mrs John An' you ain't supposed to!

Bruno Much obliged. Maybe I better toddle along, then.

Mrs John D'you know what you owes me, you scamp?

Bruno [Carelessly] What are you gettin' excited for? What is I doin' to you? What d'you want? I gotta go to my gal now. I'm sleepy. Las' night I slept under a lot o' bushes in the park. An' anyhow, I'm cleaned out— [He turns his trousers pockets inside out] An' in consequence o' that I gotta go an' earn somethin'.

Mrs John. Here you stays! Don't you dare move! If you do you c'n whine like a whipped purp an' you'll never be gettin' so much as a penny outa me no more—that's what you won't! Bruno, you're goin' ways you hadn't ought to.

Bruno Aw, what d'you think? Is I goin' to be a dam' fool? D'you think I ain' goin' when I gets a good livin' offa Hulda? [He pulls out a dirty card-case] Not so much as a measly pawn ticket has I got. Tell me what you want an' then lemme go!

Mrs John What I wants? Of you? What're you good for anyhow? You ain't good for nothin' excep' for your sister who ain't right in her head to feel sorry for you, you loafer an' scamp!

Bruno Maybe you ain' right in your head sometimes!

Mrs John Our father, he used to say when you was no more'n five an' six years old an' used to do rowdy things, that we couldn't never be proud o' you an' that I might as well let you go hang. An' my husband what's a reel honest decent man. why, you can't be seen alongside of a good man like him.

Bruno Sure, I knows all that there, Jette.

But things ain' that easy to straighten out. I knows all right I was born with a kind o' a twist in my back, even if nobody don't see it. No, I wasn't born in no castle. Well, I gotto do what I c'n do with my twist. All right. What d'you want? 'Tain't for the rats you're keepin' me. You wanta hush up somethin' wi' that whore!

Mrs John [Shaking her hand under BRUNO's nose] You give away one word o' th's an' I'll kill you, I'll make a corpse o' you!

Bruno Well now, looka here! I'm goin', y'understan'? [He mounts the stairs] Maybe someday I'll be droppin' into good luck without knowin' it.

[He disappears through the trap-door. MRS JOHN hurriedly blows out the lamp and taps her way to the door of the library. She enters it but does not wholly close the door behind her.—The noise that BRUNO actually heard was that of a key being turned in a rusty keyhole. A light step is now heard approaching the door. For a moment the street noises of Berlin as well as the yelling of children in the outer halls had been audible. Strains of a hurdy-gurdy from the yard.—WALBURGA HASSENREUTER enters with hesitating and embarrassed steps. The girl is not yet sixteen and is pretty and innocent of appearance. Sunshade, light-coloured summer dress, not coming below the ankle.]

Walburga [Halts, listens, then says nervously] Papa!—Isn't anyone up here yet? Papa! Papa! [She listens long and intently and then says] Why, what an odour of coal oil there is here! [She finds matches, lights one, is about to light the lamp and burns her fingers against the hot chimney] Ouch! Why, dear me! Who is here?.

[She has cried out and is about to run away. MRS JOHN reappears.]

Mrs John Well, Miss Walburga, who's goin' to go an' kick up a row like that! You c'n be reel quiet. 'Tain't nobody but me!

Walburga Dear me, but I've had an awful fright, Mrs John.

*Mrs John* Well, then I advise you to be gettin' out o' here to-day—on Sunday?

*Walburga* [*Laying her hand over her heart*] Why, my heart is almost standing still yet, *Mrs John*

*Mrs John* What's the matter, Miss *Walburga*? What's frightenin' you? You oughta know that from your pa that Sunday an' week day I gotta be workin' aroun' here with them boxes an' cases, dustin' an' tryin' to get rid o' the moths! An' then, after two or three weeks, when I've gone over the twelve or eighteen hundred theater rags that're lyin' here—then I gotta start all over again

*Walburga* I was frightened because the chimney of the lamp was still quite hot to the touch

*Mrs John* That's right. That there lamp was burnin' an' I put it out jus' a minute ago [*She lifts up the chimney*] It don't burn me, my hands is hard [*She lights the wick*] Well, now we has light. Now I lit it again. What's the danger here? I don't see nothin'

*Walburga* But you do look like a ghost, *Mrs John*

*Mrs John* How do you say I looks?

*Walburga* Oh, it just seems so when one comes out of the vivid sunlight into the darkness, into these musty holes. It seems as though one were surrounded by ghosts

*Mrs John* Well, you little ghost, why did you come up here? Is you alone or has you got somebody with you? Maybe papa'll be comin' in yet?

*Walburga* No, papa has been granted an important audience out in Potsdam to-day

*Mrs John* All right! What're you lookin' for here then?

*Walburga* I? Oh, I just came out for a walk!

*Mrs John* Well, then I advise you to be gettin' out o' here again. No sun don't shine into your papa's lumber-room

*Walburga* You look so grey! You had better go out into the sunlight yourself!

*Mrs John* Oh, the sunlight's for fine folks! All I needs is a couple o' pounds o' dust an' dirt on my lungs—You just go along, missie! I gotta get to work. I don't need nothin' else. I jus' lives on mildew an' insec'-powder [*She coughs*]

*Walburga* [*Nervously*] You needn't tell papa that I was up here

*Mrs John* Me? Ain't I got somethin' better to do'n that?

*Walburga* [*With assumed carelessness*] And if Mr Spitta were to ask after me . .

*Mrs John* Who?

*Walburga* The young gentleman who gives us private lessons at home .

*Mrs John* Well, s'posin'?

*Walburga* Then be so kind as to tell him that I've been here but left again at once

*Mrs John* So I'm to tell Mr. Spitta but not papa?

*Walburga* [*Involuntarily*] Oh, for heaven's sake, no!

*Mrs John* Well, you jus' wait an' see! You jus' look out! There's many a one has looked like you an' has come from your part o' the city an'—has gone to the dogs in the ditch in Dragoner street or, even, behind Swedish hangin's in Barnim street

*Walburga* Surely you don't mean to insinuate, *Mrs John*, and surely you don't believe that there's anything unpermitted or improper in my relations with Mr. Spitta?

*Mrs John* [*In extreme fright*] Shut up! —Somebody's put the key into the keyhole

*Walburga* Blow out the lamp!

[*Mrs John blows out the lamp quickly*]

*Walburga* Papa!

*Mrs John* Miss! Up into the loft with you!

[*Mrs John and Walburga both disappear through the trap-door, which closes behind them*]

[*Two gentlemen, the manager HARRO HASSENREUTER and the court actor NATHANAEEL JETTEL, appear in the frame of the outer door. The manager is of middle height, clean shaven, fifty years old. He takes long steps and shows a lively temperament in his whole demeanour. The cut of his face is noble, his eyes have a vivid, adventurous expression. His behaviour is somewhat noisy, which accords with his thoroughly fiery nature. He wears a light overcoat, a top-hat thrust back on his head, full dress suit and patent leather boots. The overcoat,*

*which is unbuttoned, reveals the decorations which almost cover his chest—Jettel wears a suit of flannels under a very light spring overcoat In his left hand he holds a straw hat and an elegant cane, he wears tan shoes He also is clean shaven and over fifty years old]*

*Hassenreuter [Calls] John! Mrs John! —Well, now you see my catacombs, my dear fellow! Sic transit gloria mundi! Here I've stored everything—mutatis mutandis—that was left of my whole theatrical glory—trash, trash! Old rags! Old tatters! —John! John! She's been here, for the lamp chimney is still quite hot! [He strikes a match and lights the lamp] Fiat lux, pereat mundus! Now you can get a good view of my paradise of moths and rats and fleas!*

*Jettel You received my card, didn't you, my dear manager?*

*Hassenreuter Mrs John!—I'll see if she is in the loft up there [He mounts the stairs and rattles at the trap-door] Locked! And of course the wretched creature has the key tied to her apron [He beats enragedly against the trap-door with his fist] John! John!*

*Jettel [Somewhat impatient] Can't we manage without this Mrs John?*

*Hassenreuter What? Do you think that I, in my dress suit and with all my decorations, just back from His Highness, can go through my three hundred boxes and cases just to rout out the wretched rags that you are pleased to need for your engagement here?*

*Jettel I beg your pardon But I'm not wont to appear in rags on my tours*

*Hassenreuter Man alive, then play in your drawers for all I care! It wouldn't worry me! Only don't quite forget who's standing before you Because the court actor Jettel is pleased to emit a whistle—well, that's no reason why the manager Harro Hassenreuter should begin to dance Confound it, because some comedian wants a shabby turban or two old boots, is that any reason why a pater familias like myself must give up his only spare time at home on Sunday afternoon? I suppose you expect me to creep about on all fours into the corners here? No, my good fellow, for*

*that kind of thing you'll have to look elsewhere!*

*Jettel [Quite calmly] Would you mind telling me, if possible, who has been treading on your corns?*

*Hassenreuter My boy, it's scarcely an hour since I had my legs under the same table with a prince post hoc, ergo propter hoc! —On your account I got into a confounded 'bus and drove out to this confounded hole, and so . . . if you don't know how to value my kindness, you can get out!*

*Jettel You made an appointment with me for four o'clock Then you let me wait one solid hour in this horrible tenement, in these lovely halls with their filthy brats! Well, I waited and didn't address the slightest reproach to you And now you have the good taste and the good manners to use me as a kind of a cuspidor!*

*Hassenreuter My boy . . .*

*Jettel The devil! I'm not your boy! You seem to be kind of a clown that I ought to force to turn somersaults for pennies! [Highly indignant, he picks up his hat and cane and goes]*

*Hassenreuter [Starts, breaks out into boisterous laughter and then calls out after Jettel] Don't make yourself ridiculous! And, anyhow, I'm not a costumer!*

*[The slamming of the outer door is heard]*

*Hassenreuter [Pulls out his watch] The confounded idiot! The damned mutton head—It's a blessing the ridiculous ass went! [He puts the watch back into his pocket, pulls it out again at once and listens He walks restlessly to and fro, then stops, gazes into his top-hat, which contains a mirror, and combs his hair carefully He walks over to the middle door and opens a few of the letters that he heaped up there. At the same time he sings in a trilling voice]*

*"O Strassburg, O Strassburg,  
Thou beautiful old town"*

*[Once more he looks at his watch Suddenly the doorbell at his head rings] On the minute! Ah, but these little girls can be punctual when they really care about it! [He hurries out into the hall and is heard to extend a loud and merry welcome to someone The trumpet notes of his voice are soon accompanied by the bell-like tones of a woman's speaking Very soon he reap-*



pears, at his side an elegant young lady, ALICE RÜTTERBUSCH ]—Alice! My little Alice! Come here where I can see you, little girl! Come here into the light! I must see whether you're the same infinitely delightful, mad little Alice that you were in the great days of my career in Alsace? Girl, it was I who taught you to walk! I held your leading strings for your first steps. I taught you how to talk, girl! The things you said! I hope you haven't forgotten!

Alice Rütterbusch Now, look here! You don't believe that I'm an ungrateful girl?

Hassenreuter [Draws up her veil] Why, girlie, you've grown younger instead of older

Alice Rütterbusch [Flushed with delight] Well, a person would just have to lie like everything to say that you had changed to your disadvantage! But, do you know—it's awful dark up here really and—Harro, maybe you wouldn't mind opening a window a little—oh, the air's a bit heavy, too

Hassenreuter "Pillicock sat on Pillicock-hill"

"But mice and rats and such small deer Have been Tom's food for seven long year"

In all seriousness I have passed through dark and difficult times! In spite of the fact that I preferred not to write you of it, I have no doubt that you are informed

Alice Rütterbusch But it wasn't extra friendly, you know, for you not to answer one little word to the long, nice letter I wrote you

Hassenreuter Ha, ha, ha! What's the use of answering a little girl's letter if one has both hands full taking care of oneself and can't possibly be of the slightest use to her? Pshaw! *E nihilo nihil fit!* In the vernacular You can't get results out of nothing! Moth and dust! Dust and moths! And that's all my efforts for the German culture in the west profited me!

Alice Rütterbusch So you didn't turn over your collection of properties to manager Kunz

Hassenreuter "O Strassburg, O Strassburg, Thou beautiful old town!"

No, little one, I didn't leave my properties in Strassburg! This ex-waiter, ex-inn-keeper and lessee of disreputable dance halls, this idiot, this imbecile who succeeded me, didn't happen to want my stuff. No,

I didn't leave my collection of properties there, but what I did have to leave there was forty thousand crowns of hard-earned money left me from my old touring days as an actor, and, in addition, fifty thousand crowns which formed the dowry of my excellent wife. However, it was a piece of good luck, after all, that I kept the properties. Ha, ha, ha! These fellows here

[He touches one of the mailed figures] surely you remember them?

Alice Rütterbusch Could I forget my pasteboard knights?

Hassenreuter Very well, then. it was these pasteboard knights and all the other trash that surrounds them, that actually, after his hegira, kept the old rag-picker and costumer, Harro Eberhard Hassenreuter, above water. But let's speak of cheerful things. I saw with pleasure in the paper that his Excellency has engaged you for Berlin.

Alice Rütterbusch. I don't care a great deal about it! I'd rather play for you, and you must promise me, whenever you undertake the management of a theatre again—you will promise, won't you?—that you'll let me break my contract right away? [The MANAGER laughs heartily] I had to be annoyed quite enough for three long years by the barn-stormers of the provinces. Berlin I don't like, and a court theatre least of all. Lord, what people and what a profession it is! You know I belong to your collection—I've always belonged to it! [She stands up proudly among the pasteboard knights]

Hassenreuter Ha, ha, ha, ha! Well then, come to my arms, faithful knight! [He opens his arms wide, she flies into them, and they now salute each other with long, continuous kisses]

Alice Rütterbusch Go on, Harro. Now tell me. How is your wife?

Hassenreuter Teresa gets along very well except that she gets fatter every day in spite of sorrow and worries—Girl, girl, how fragrant you are! [He presses her to him] Do you know that you're a devilish dangerous person?

Alice Rütterbusch D'you think I'm an idiot? Of course I'm dangerous!

Hassenreuter Well, I'll be . . . !

Alice Rütterbusch Why, do you think if I didn't know it was dangerous, dangerous



for us both, I'd make an appointment with you out here in this lovely neighbourhood, under this stuffy roof? By the way, though, since I'm always bound to have the queerest luck if ever I do go a bit on questionable ways, whom should I meet on the stairs but Nathanael Jettel? I almost ran into the gentleman's arms! He'll take good care that my visiting you doesn't remain our secret

*Hassenreuter* I must have made a mistake in writing down the date The fellow insists on asserting—ha, ha, ha!—that I made an engagement with him for this very afternoon

*Alice Rutterbusch* And that wasn't the only person I met on the six flights And as for the dear little children that roll about on the stairs here! What they called out after me was unparliamentary to a degree—such vulgarities as I've never heard from such little beggars in my life.

*Hassenreuter* [*Laughs, then speaks seriously*] Ah, yes! But one gets accustomed to that You could never write down all the life that sweeps down these stairs with its soiled petticoats—the life that cringes and creeps, moans, sighs, sweats, cries out, curses, mutters, hammers, planes, jeers, steals, drives its dark trades up and down these stairs—the sinister creatures that hide here, playing their zithers, grinding their accordions, sticking in need and hunger and misery, leading their vicious lives—no, it's beyond one's power of recording And your old manager, last but not least, runs, groans, sighs, sweats, cries out and curses with the best of them Ha, ha, ha, girlie! I've had a pretty wretched time

*Alice Rutterbusch* Oh, by the way, d'you know whom I ran into just as I was making for the railroad station at the Zoological Garden? The good old Prince Statthalter! And straight off, cool as a cucumber—that's my way you know—I tripped along next to him for twenty minutes and got him absorbed in a conversation And then something happened, Harro, upon my honour, just as I'm going to tell you—literally and truly. Suddenly on the bridle-path His Majesty came riding along with a great suite I thought I'd sink into the earth with embarrassment And His Majesty laughed right out and threatened his Serenity playfully with his finger. But

I was delighted, you may believe me The main thing comes now, however Just think! His Serenity asked me whether I'd be glad to go back to Strassburg if the manager Hassenreuter were to assume direction of the theatre there again. Well, you may know that I almost jumped for joy!

*Hassenreuter* [*Throws off his overcoat and stands with his decorations displayed*] You probably couldn't help noticing that His Serenity had had a most excellent breakfast Aha! We had breakfast together! We attended an exquisite little stag party given by Prince Ruprecht out in Potsdam I don't deny, therefore, that a turn for good may take place in the miserable fate of your friend

*Alice Rutterbusch* Sweetheart, you look like a statesman, like an ambassador!

*Hassenreuter*. Ah, don't you know this breast covered with high and exalted decorations? Klarchen and Egmont! Here you can drink your fill! [*They embrace each other anew*] *Carpe diem!* Enjoy the passing hour! Ah, my little Miss Simplicity, champagne is not recorded at present on the repertory of your old manager, inspirer and friend. [*He opens a wooden case and draws forth a bottle of wine*] But this old cloister vintage isn't to be sneezed at either! [*He pulls the cork. At the same moment the door bell rings*] What? Sh! I wonder who has the monstrous impudence to ring here on Sunday afternoon? [*The bell rings with increased violence*] Confound it all—the fellow must be a lunatic Little girl, suppose you withdraw into the library [*Alice hurries into the library The ringing is repeated He hurries to the door*] Either be patient or go to the devil [*He is heard opening the door*] Who? What? "It is I, Miss Walburga" What? I am not Miss Walburga I am not the daughter I am the father Oh, it's you, Mr Spitta! Your very humble servant I'm only her father—only her father! What is it that you want?

[*HASSENREUTER reappears in the passage accompanied by ERICH SPITTA, a young man of twenty-one, spectacled, with keen and not undistinguished features SPITTA passes as a student of theology and is correspondingly dressed He does not hold himself erect*

*and his development shows the influence of overstudy and under-feeding]*

*Hassenreuter* Did you intend to give my daughter one of your private lessons here in my storeroom?

*Spitta* I was riding past on the tram-car and I really thought I had seen Miss Walburga hurry into the doorway downstairs

*Hassenreuter* No possibility of such a thing, my dear Spitta. At this moment my daughter Walburga is attending a ritualistic service with her mother in the Anglican church

*Spitta* Then perhaps you'll forgive my intrusion. I took the liberty of coming upstairs because I thought that Miss Walburga might not find it unpleasant or useless to have an escort home through this neighbourhood

*Hassenreuter* Very good! Very excellent! But she isn't here. I regret it. I'm here myself by the merest chance—on account of the mail. And in addition, I have other pressing engagements. Can I do anything else for you?

*[SPITTA polishes his glasses and betrays signs of embarrassment]*

*Spitta* One doesn't grow used to the darkness at once

*Hassenreuter* Perhaps you stand in need of the tuition due you. Sorry, but unfortunately I have the habit of going out with only some small change in my waistcoat pocket. So I must ask you to have patience until I am at home again

*Spitta* Not the least hurry in the world

*Hassenreuter* Yes, it's easy for you to say that. I'm like a hunted animal, my dear fellow

*Spitta* And yet I would like to beg for a minute of your precious time. I can't but look upon this unexpected meeting as a kind of providential arrangement. In short may I put a question to you?

*Hassenreuter* *[With his eyes on his watch, which he has just been winding]* One minute exactly. By the watch, my good fellow!

*Spitta* Both my question and your answer need hardly take that long

*Hassenreuter* Well, then!

*Spitta* Have I any talent for the stage?

*Hassenreuter* For the love of God, man! Have you gone mad?—Forgive me, my dear

fellow, if a case like this excites me to the point of being discourteous. You have certainly given the lie to the saying *natura non facit saltus* by the unnatural leap that you've taken. I must first get my breath after that! And now let's put an end to this at once. Believe me, if we were both to discuss the question now we wouldn't come to any conclusion in two or three weeks, or rather let us say years—You are a theologian by profession, my good fellow, and you were born in a parsonage. You have all the necessary connections and a smooth road to a comfortable way of life ahead of you. How did you hit upon such a notion as this?

*Spitta* That's a long story of the inner life, Mr Hassenreuter, of difficult spiritual struggles—a story which, until this moment, has been an absolute secret and known only to myself. But my good fortune led me into your house and from that moment on I felt that I was drawing nearer and nearer to the true aim of my life

*Hassenreuter* *[Wildly impatient]* That's very creditable to me, that does honour to my family and myself! *[He puts his hands on SPITTA's shoulders]* And yet I must make it in the form of an urgent request that, at this moment, you refrain from a further discussion of the question. My affairs cannot wait

*Spitta* Then I will only add the expression of my absolutely firm decision

*Hassenreuter* But, my dear Spitta, who has put these mad notions into your head? I've taken real pleasure in the thought of you. I've really been quietly envying you the peaceful parsonage that was to be yours. I've attached no special significance to certain literary ambitions that one is likely to pick up in the metropolis. That's a mere phase, I thought, and will be quite passing in his case! And now you want to become an actor? God help you, were I your father! I'd lock you up on bread and water and not let you out again until the very memory of this folly was gone. *Dix!* And now, good-bye, my dear man

*Spitta* I'm afraid that locking me up or resorting to force of any kind would not help in my case at all

*Hassenreuter* But, man alive, you want to become an actor—you, with your round shoulders, with your spectacles and, above

all, with your hoarse and sharp voice It's impossible

*Spitta* If such fellows as I exist in real life, why shouldn't they exist on the stage too? And I am of the opinion that a smooth, well-sounding voice, probably combined with the Goethe-Schiller-Weimar school of idealistic artifice, is harmful rather than helpful The only question is whether you would take me, just as I am, as a pupil?

*Hassenreuter* [*Hastily draws on his overcoat*] I would not In the first place my school of acting is only one of the schools of idealistic artifice which you mention In the second place I wouldn't be responsible to your father for such an action And in the third place, we quarrel enough as it is—every time you stay to supper at my house after giving your lessons If you were my pupil, we'd come to blows And now, *Spitta*, I must catch the car

*Spitta* My father is already informed In a letter of twelve pages, I have given him a full history of the change that has taken place within me . . .

*Hassenreuter* I'm sure the old gentleman will feel flattered! And now come along with me or I'll go insane!

[*HASSENREUTER forcibly takes SPITTA out with him The door is heard to slam The room grows silent but for the uninterrupted roar of Berlin, which can now be clearly heard The trap-door to the loft is now opened and WALBURGA HASSENREUTER clambers down in mad haste, followed by MRS JOHN*]

*Mrs John* [*Whispering vehemently*] What's the matter? Nothin' ain't happened

*Walburga* Mrs John, I'll scream! I'll have to scream in another second! Oh, for heaven's sake, I can't help it much longer, Mrs John!

*Mrs John* Stuff a handkerchief between your teeth! There ain't nothin'! Why d'you take on so?

*Walburga* [*With chattering teeth, making every effort to suppress her sobs*] I'm frightened! Oh, I'm frightened to death, Mrs John!

*Mrs John* I'd like to know what you're so scared about!

*Walburga* Why, didn't you see that horrible man?

*Mrs John* That ain't nothin' so horrible. That's my brother what sometimes helps me clean up your pa's things here

*Walburga* And that girl who sits with her back to the chimney and whines?

*Mrs John* Well, your mother didn't act no different when you was expected to come into the world

*Walburga* Oh, it's all over with me. I'll die if papa comes back

*Mrs John* Well then hurry and get out an' don' fool roun' no more!

[*MRS JOHN accompanies the horrified girl along the passage, lets her out, and then returns*]

*Mrs John* Thank God, that girl don' know but what the moon is made o' cheese!

[*She takes the uncorked bottle, pours out a glass full of wine and takes it with her to the loft into which she disappears The room is scarcely empty when HASSENREUTER returns*]

*Hassenreuter* [*Still in the door Singing*] "Come on down, O Madonna Teresa!"

[*He calls*] Alice! [*Still in the door*] Come on! Help me put up my iron bar with a double lock before the door Alice! [*He comes forward*] Any one else who dares to interrupt our Sunday quiet—*anathema sit!* Here! You imp! Where are you, Alice? [*He observes the bottle and lifts it against the light*] What? Half empty! The little scamp! [*From behind the door of the library a pleasant woman's voice is heard singing coloratura passages*] Ha, ha, ha, ha! Heavens and earth! She's tipsy already

## ACT TWO

MRS JOHN'S rooms on the second floor of the same house in the attics of which HASSENREUTER has stored his properties A high, deep, green-tinted room which betrays its original use as part of a barracks The rear wall shows a double door which gives on the outer hall Above this door there hangs a bell connected by a wire with the knob outside To the right of the door a partition, covered with wall-paper, projects into the room This partition takes a rectangular turn and extends to the right wall A portion of the room is thus partitioned off and serves as sleeping-chamber. From

within the partition, which is about six feet high, cupboards are seen against the wall

Entering the room from the hall, one observes to the left a sofa covered with oil-cloth. The back of the sofa is pushed against the partition wall. The latter is adorned with small photographs: the foreman-mason JOHN as a soldier, JOHN and his wife in their wedding garb, etc. An oval table, covered with a faded cotton cloth, stands before the sofa. In order to reach the entrance of the sleeping-chamber from the door it is necessary to pass the table and sofa. This entrance is closed by hangings of blue cotton cloth. Against the narrow front wall of the partition stands a neatly equipped kitchen cabinet. To the right, against the wall of the main room, the stove. This corner of the room serves the purposes of kitchen and pantry. Sitting on the sofa one would look straight at the left wall of the room, which is broken by two large windows. A neatly planed board has been fastened to the nearer of the windows to serve as a kind of desk. Upon it are lying blue-prints, counter-drawings, an inch-measure, a compass and a square. A small, raised platform is seen beneath the farther window. Upon it stands a small table with glasses. An old easy chair of cane and a number of simple wooden chairs complete the frugal equipment of the room, which creates an impression of neatness and orderliness such as is often found in the dwellings of childless couples.

It is about five o'clock of an afternoon toward the end of May. The warm sunlight shines through the windows.

The foreman-mason JOHN, a good-natured, bearded man of forty, sits at the desk in the foreground taking notes from the building plans.

MRS JOHN sits sewing on the small platform by the farther window. She is very pale. There is something gentle and pain-touched about her, but her face shows an expression of deep contentment, which is broken only now and then by a momentary gleam of restlessness and suspense. A neat new perambulator stands by her side. In it lies a newborn child.

John [Modestly] Mother, how'd it be if I was to open the window jus' a speck an' was to light my pipe for a bit?

Mrs John Does you have to smoke? If not, you better let it be!

John No, I don't has to, mother. Only I'd like to! Never mind, though. A quid'll be just as good in the end. [With comfortable circumstantiality he prepares a new quid.]

Mrs John [After a brief silence] How's that? You has to go to the public registry office again?

John That's what he told me, that I had to come back again an' tell him exackly that I had to give the exack place an' time when that little kid was born.

Mrs John [Holding a needle in her mouth] Well, why didn't you tell him that right away?

John How was I to know it? I didn't know, you see.

Mrs John You didn't know that?

John Well, I wasn't here, was I?

Mrs John You wasn't. That's right. If you goes an' leaves me here in Berlin an' stays from one year's end to another in Hamburg, an' at most comes to see me once a month—how is you to know what happens in your own home?

John Don't you want me to go where the boss has most work for me? I goes where I c'n make good money.

Mrs John I wrote you in my letter as how our little boy was born in this here room.

John I knows that an' I told him that. Ain't that natural, I axes him, that the child was born in our room? An' he says that ain't natural at all. Well then, says I, for all I cares, maybe it was up in the loft with the rats an' mice! I got mad like 'cause he said maybe the child wasn't born here at all. Then he yells at me. What kind o' talk is that? What? says I. I takes an interest in wages an' earnin' an' not in talk—not me, Mr Registrar! An' now I'm to give him the exack day an' hour.

Mrs John An' didn't I write it all out for you on a bit o' paper?

John When a man's mad he's forgetful. I believe if he'd up and axed me. Is you Paul John, foreman-mason? I'd ha' answered. I don't know. Well an' then I'd been a bit jolly too an' taken a drink or two with Fritz. An' while we was doin' that who comes along but Schubert an' Karl an' they says as how I has to set up on account.

o' bein' a father now Those fellers, they didn't let me go an' they was waitin' downstairs in front o' the public registry An' so I kept thinkin' o' them standin' there So when he axes me on what day my wife was delivered, I didn't know nothin' an' just laughed right in his face

*Mrs John* I wish you'd first attended to what you had to an' left your drinkin' till later

*John* It's easy to say that! But if you're up to them kind o' tricks in your old age, mother, you can't blame me for bein' reel glad

*Mrs John* All right You go on to the registry now an' say that your child was borne by your wife in your dwellin' on the twenty-fifth o' May

*John* Wasn't it on the twenty-sixth? 'Cause I said right along the twenty-sixth Then he must ha' noticed that I wasn't quite sober So he says If that's a fac', all right, if not, you gotta come back

*Mrs John* In that case you'd better leave it as it is

*[The door is opened and SELMA KNOBBE pushes in a wretched perambulator which presents the saddest contrast to MRS JOHN'S Swaddled in pitiful rags a newly born child lies therein]*

*Mrs John* Oh, no, Selma, comin' into my room with that there sick child—that was all right before But that can't be done no more

*Selma* He just gasps with that cough o' his'n Over at our place they smokes all the time

*Mrs John* I told you, Selma, that you could come from time to time and get milk or bread But while my little Adelbert is here an' c'n catch maybe consumption or somethin', you just leave that poor little thing at home with his fine mother

*Selma* *[Tearfully]* Mother ain't been home at all yesterday or to-day I can't get no sleep with this child He just moans all night I gotta get some sleep sometime! I'll jump outa the window first thing or I'll let the baby lie in the muddle o' the street an' run away so no policeman can't never find me!

*John* *[Looks at the strange child]* Looks bad! Mother, why don't you try an' do somethin' for the little beggar?

*Mrs John* *[Pushing SELMA and the perambulator out determinedly]* March outa this room That can't be done, Paul When you got your own you can't be lookin' out for other people's brats That Knobbe woman c'n look after her own affairs It's different with Selma *[To the girl]* You c'n come in when you want to You c'n come in here after a while an' take a nap even *[She closes the door]*

*John* You used to take a good deal o' interest in Knobbe's dirty little brats

*Mrs John* You don' understan' that I don' want our little Adelbert to be catchin' sore eyes or convulsions or somethin' like that

*John* Maybe you're right Only, don't go an' call him Adelbert, mother That ain't a good thing to do, to call a child by the same name as one that was carried off, unbaptised, a week after it was born Let that be, mother I can't stand for that, mother

*[A knocking is heard at the door.]*

*JOHN is about to open]*

*Mrs John* What's that?

*John* Well, somebody wants to get in!

*Mrs John.* *[Hastily turning the key in the lock]* I ain't goin' to have everybody runnin' in on me now that I'm sick as this. *[She listens at the door and then calls out]* I can't open! What d'you want?

*A Woman's Voice* *[Somewhat deep and mannish in tone]* It is Mrs Hassenreuter

*Mrs John* *[Surprised]* Goodness gracious! *[She opens the door]* I beg your pardon, Mrs Hassenreuter! I didn't even know who it was!

*[MRS HASSENREUTER has now entered, followed by WALBURGA She is a colossal, asthmatic lady over fifty WALBURGA is dressed with greater simplicity than in the first act She carries a rather large package]*

*Mrs Hassenreuter* How do you do, Mrs John? Although climbing stairs is . . . very hard for me I wanted to see how everything . . . goes with you after the . . . yes, the very happy event

*Mrs John* I'm gettin' along again kind o' half way

*Mrs Hassenreuter* That is probably your husband, Mrs John? Well, one must say, one is bound to say, that your dear wife, in the long time of waiting—never com-

plained, was always cheery and merry, and did her work well for my husband upstairs

*John.* That's right She was mighty glad, too

*Mrs Hassenreuter.* Well, then we'll have the pleasure—at least, your wife will have the pleasure of seeing you at home oftener than heretofore

*Mrs John.* I has a good husband, Mrs Hassenreuter, who takes care o' me an' has good habits An' because Paul was workin' out o' town you mustn't think there was any danger o' his leavin' me But a man like that, where his brother has a boy o' twelve in the non-commissioned officer's school . . . it's no kind of life for him havin' no children o' his own He gets to thinkin' queer thoughts There he is in Hamburg, makin' good money, an' he has the chance every day and—well—then he takes a notion, maybe, he'd like to go to America

*John.* Oh, that was never more'n a thought

*Mrs John.* Well, you see, with us poor people . . . it's hard-earned bread that we eats . . . an' yet . . . [*lightly she runs her hand through John's hair*] even if there's one more an' you has more cares on that account—you see how the tears is runnin' down his cheeks—well, he's mighty happy anyhow!

*John.* That's because three years ago we had a little feller an' when he was a week old he took sick an' died

*Mrs Hassenreuter.* My husband has already . . . yes, my husband did tell me about that . . . how deeply you grieved over that little son of yours You know how it is . . . you know how my good husband has his eyes and his heart open to everything And if it's a question of people who are about him or who give him their services—then everything good or bad, yes, everything good or bad that happens to them, seems just as though it had happened to himself

*Mrs John.* I mind as if it was this day how he sat in the carriage that time with the little child's coffin on his knees He wouldn't let the gravedigger so much as touch it

*John.* [*Wiping the moisture out of his eyes*] That's the way it was No I couldn't let him do that

*Mrs Hassenreuter.* Just think, to-day at the dinner-table we had to drink wine—suddenly, to drink wine! Wine! For years and years the city-water in decanters has been our only table drink . . . absolutely the only one Dear children, said my husband—You know that he had just returned from an eleven or twelve day trip to Alsace Let us drink, my husband said, the health of my good and faithful Mrs John, because . . . he cried out in his beautiful voice . . . because she is a visible proof of the fact that the cry of a mother heart is not indifferent to our Lord—And so we drank your health, clinking our glasses! Well, and here I'm bringing you at my husband's special . . . at his very special and particular order . . . an apparatus for the sterilisation of milk—Walburga, you may unpack the boiler

[*HASSENREUTER enters unceremoniously through the outer door which has stood ajar He wears a top-hat, spring overcoat, carries a silver-headed cane, in a word, is gotten up in his somewhat shabby week-day outfit He speaks hastily and almost without pauses*]

*Hassenreuter.* [*Wiping the sweat from his forehead*] Berlin is hot, ladies and gentlemen, hot! And the cholera is as near as St Petersburg! Now you've complained to my pupils, Spitta and Kaferstein, Mrs John, that your little one doesn't seem to gain in weight Now, of course, it's one of the symptoms of the general decadence of our age that the majority of mothers are either unwilling to nurse their offspring or incapable of it But you've already lost one child on account of diarrhoea, Mrs John No, there's no help for it we must call a spade a spade And so, in order that you do not meet with the same misfortune over again, or fall into the hands of old women whose advice is usually quite deadly for an infant—in order that these things may not happen, I say, I have caused my wife to bring you this apparatus I've brought up all my children, Walburga included, by the help of such an apparatus

Aha! So one gets a glimpse of you again, Mr John! Bravo! The emperor needs soldiers, and you needed a representative of your race! So I congratulate you



with all my heart [*He shakes JOHN's hand vigorously.*]

Mrs Hassenreuter. [*Leaning over the infant*] How much . . . how much did he weigh at birth?

Mrs John He weighed exactly eight pounds and ten ounces

Hassenreuter [*With noisy joviality*] Ha, ha, ha! A vigorous product, I must say! Eight pounds and ten ounces of good healthy, German national flesh!

Mrs Hassenreuter Look at his eyes! And his little nose! His father over again! Why, the little fellow is really, really, the very image of you, Mr John

Hassenreuter I trust that you will have the boy received into the communion of the Christian Church

Mrs John [*With happy impressiveness*] Oh, he'll be christened properly, right in the parochial church at the font by a clergyman

Hassenreuter Right! And what are his baptismal names to be?

Mrs John Well, you know the way men is That's caused a lot o' talk I was thinkin' o' "Bruno," but he won't have it!

Hassenreuter Surely Bruno isn't a bad name

John That may be I ain't sayin' but what Bruno is a good enough name I don't want to give no opinion about that

Mrs John Why don't you say as how I has a brother what's twelve years younger'n me an' what don't always do just right? But that's only 'cause there's so much temptation That boy's a good boy Only you won't believe it

John [*Turns red with sudden rage*] Jette . . . you know what a cross that feller was to us! What d'you want? You want our little feller to be the namesake of a man what's—I can't help sayin' it—what's under police soopervision?

Hassenreuter Then, for heaven's sake, get him some other patron saint

John Lord protect me from sich! I tried to take an interest in Bruno! I got him a job in a machine-shop an' didn't get nothin' outa it but annoyance an' disgrace! God forbid that he should come aroun' an' have anythin' to do with this little feller o' mine [*He clenches his fist*] If that was to happen, Jette, I wouldn't be responsible for myself!

Mrs John You needn't go on, Paul! Bruno ain't comin'. But I c'n tell you this much for certain, that my brother was good an' helpful to me in this hard time

John Why didn't you send for me?

Mrs. John I didn't want no man aroun' that was scared

Hassenreuter. Aren't you an admirer of Bismarck, John?

John [*Scratching the back of his head*] I can't say as to that exackly My brothers in the masons' union, though, they ain't admirers o' him

Hassenreuter. Then you have no German hearts in your bodies! Otto is what I called my eldest son who is in the imperial navy! And believe me [*pointing to the infant*] this coming generation will well know what it owes to that mighty hero, the great forger of German unity! [*He takes the tin boiler of the apparatus which WALBURGA has unpacked into his hands and lifts it high up*] Now then the whole business of this apparatus is mere child's play This frame which holds all the bottles—each bottle to be filled two-thirds with water and one-third with milk—is sunk into the boiler which is filled with boiling water By keeping the water at the boiling-point for an hour and a half in this manner, the content of the bottles becomes free of germs Chemists call this process sterilisation

John Jette, at the master-mason's house, the milk that's fed to the twins is sterilised too

[*The pupils of HASSENREUTER, KÄFERSTEIN and DR KEGEL, two young men between twenty and twenty-five years of age, have knocked at the door and then opened it*]

Hassenreuter [*Noticing his pupils*] Patience, gentlemen I'll be with you directly At the moment I am busying myself with the problems of the nourishment of infants and the care of children

Kaferstein [*His head bears witness to a sharply defined character large nose, pale, a serious expression, beardless, about the mouth a flicker of kindly mischievousness With hollow voice, gentle and suppressed*] You must know that we are the three kings out of the East

*Hassenreuter* [Who still holds the apparatus aloft in his hands] What are you?

*Käferstein* [As before] We want to adore the babe

*Hassenreuter* Ha, ha, ha, ha! If you are the kings out of the East, gentlemen, it seems to me that the third of you is lacking

*Käferstein* The third is our new fellow pupil in the field of dramaturgic activity, the *studiosus theologiae*, who is detained at present at the corner of Blumen and Wallnertheater streets by an accident partly sociological, partly psychological in its nature

*Dr Kegel* We made all possible haste to escape

*Hassenreuter* Do you see, a star stands above this house, Mrs John! But do tell me, has our excellent Spitta once more made some public application of his quackery for the healing of the so-called sins of the social order? Ha, ha, ha, ha! *Semper idem!* Why, that fellow is actually becoming a nuisance!

*Käferstein* A crowd gathered in the street for some reason and it seems that he discovered a friend in the midst of it

*Hassenreuter* According to my unauthoritative opinion this young Spitta would have done much better as a surgeon's assistant or Salvation Army officer. But that's the way of the world: the fellow must needs want to be an actor

*Mrs Hassenreuter* Mr Spitta, the children's tutor, wants to become an actor?

*Hassenreuter* That is exactly the plan he has proposed to me, mama—But now, if you bring incense and myrrh, dear Käferstein, out with them! You observe what a many-sided man your teacher is. Now I help my pupils, thirsty after the contents of the Muses' breasts, to the nourishment they desire—*nutrimentum spiritus*—again!

*Käferstein* [Rattles a toy bank] Well, I deposit this offering, which is a fire-proof bank, next to the perambulator of this excellent offspring of the mason, with the wish that he will rise to be at least a royal architect

*John* [Having put cordial glasses on the table, he fetches and opens a fresh bottle] Well, now I'm goin' to uncork the *Danziger Goldwasser*

*Hassenreuter* To him who hath shall be given, as you observe, Mrs John

*John* [Filling the glasses] Nobody ain't goin' to say that my child's unprovided for, gentlemen. But I takes it very kindly o' you, gentlemen! [All except Mrs Hassenreuter and Walburga lift up their glasses] To your health! Come on, mother, we'll drink together too

[The action follows the words]

*Hassenreuter* [In a tone of reproof] Mama, you must, of course, drink with us.

*John* [Having drunk, with jolly expansiveness] I ain't goin' to Hamburg no more now. The boss c'n send some other feller there. I been quarrelin' with him about that these three days. I gotta take up my hat right now an' go there, he axed me to come roun' to his office again at six. If he don't want to give in, he needn't. It won't never do for the father of a family to be forever an' a day away from his family. I got a friend—why, all I

gotta do's to say the word 'n I c'n get work on the layin' o' the foundations o' the new houses o' Parliament. Twelve years I been workin' for this same boss! I c'n afford to make a change some time

*Hassenreuter* [Pats John's shoulder] Quite of your opinion, quite! Our family life is something that neither money nor kind words can buy of us

[ERICH SPITTA enters. His hat is soiled, his clothes show traces of mud. His tie is gone. He looks pale and excited and is busy wiping his hands with his handkerchief]

*Spitta* Beg pardon, but I wonder if I could brush up here a little, Mrs John?

*Hassenreuter* Ha, ha, ha! For heaven's sake, what have you been up to, my good Spitta?

*Spitta* I only escorted a lady home, Mr Hassenreuter—nothing else!

*Hassenreuter* [Who has joined in the general outburst of laughter called forth by SPITTA's explanation] Well now, listen here! You blandly say. Nothing else! And you announce it publicly here before all these people?

*Spitta* [In consternation] Why not? The lady in question was very well dressed, I've often seen her on the stairs of this



house, and she unfortunately met with an accident on the street

*Hassenreuter* You don't say so? Tell us about it, dear Spitta! Apparently the lady inflicted spots on your clothes and scratches on your hands

*Spitta* Oh, no That was probably the fault of the mob The lady had an attack of some kind The policeman caught hold of her so awkwardly that she slipped down in the middle of the street immediately in front of two omnibus horses I simply couldn't bear to see that, although I admit that the function of the Good Samaritan is, as a rule, beneath the dignity of well-dressed people on the public streets

[*MRS JOHN wheels the perambulator behind the partition and reappears with a basin full of water, which she places on a chair*]

*Hassenreuter* Did the lady, by any chance, belong to that international high society which we either regulate or segregate?

*Spitta* I confess that that was quite as indifferent to me in the given instance, as it was to one of the omnibus horses who held his left fore foot suspended in the air for five, six or, perhaps, even eight solid minutes, in order not to trample on the woman who lay immediately beneath it [*SPITTA is answered by a round of laughter*] You may laugh! The behaviour of the horse didn't strike me as in the least ludicrous I could well understand how some people applauded him, clapped their hands, and how others stormed a bakery to buy buns with which to feed him

*Mrs John* [*Fanatically*] I wish he'd trampled all he could! [*MRS JOHN'S remark calls forth another outburst of laughter*] An' anyhow! That there Knobbe woman! She oughta be put in some public place, that she ought, publicly strapped to a bench an' then beaten—beaten—that's what! She oughta have the stick taken to her so the blood jus' spurts!

*Spitta* Exactly I've never been deflected into thinking that the so-called Middle Ages were quite over and done with It isn't so long ago, in the year eighteen hundred and thirty-seven, as a matter of fact, that a widow named Mayer was publicly broken on the wheel right here in the

city of Berlin on Hausvogtei Square—[*He displays fragments of the lenses of his spectacles*] By the way, I must hurry to the optician at once

*John* [*To SPITTA*] You must excuse us But didn't you take that there fine lady home on this very floor acrost the way? Aha! Well, mother she noticed it right off that that couldn't ha' been nobody but that Knobbe woman what's known for sendin' girls o' twelve out on the streets! Then she stays away herself an' swills liquor an' has all kinds o' dealin's an' takes no care o' her own children Then when she's been drunk an' wakes up she beats 'em with her fists an' with an umbrella

*Hassenreuter* [*Pulling himself together and bethinking himself*] Hurry, gentlemen! We must proceed to our period of instruction We're fifteen minutes behind hand as it is and our time is limited We must close the period quite punctually to-day I'm sorry Come, mama See you later, ladies and gentlemen.

[*HASSENREUTER offers his arm to his wife and leaves the room, followed by KÄFERSTEIN and DR KEGEL JOHN also picks up his slouch hat*]

*John* [*To his wife*] Good-bye I gotta go an' see the boss [*He also leaves*]

*Spitta* Could you possibly lend me a tie?

*Mrs. John.* I'll see what c'n be found in Paul's drawer [*She opens the drawer of the table and turns pale*] O Lord! [*She takes from the drawer a lock of child's hair held together by a riband*] I found a bit of lock o' hair here that was cut off the head of our little Adelbert by his father when he was lyn' in the coffin [*A profound, grief-stricken sadness suddenly comes over her face, which gives way again, quite as suddenly, to a gleam of triumph*] An' now the crib is full again after all! [*With an expression of strange joyfulness, the lock of hair in her hand, she leads the young people to the door of the partition through which the perambulator projects into the main room by two-thirds of its length Arrived there she holds the lock of hair close to the head of the living child*] Come on! Come on here! [*With a strangely mysterious air she beckons to WALBURGA and SPITTA, who take up their stand next to*

her and to the child! Now look at that there hair an' at this! Ain't it the same? Wouldn't you say it was the same identical hair?

*Spitta* Quite right It's the same to the minutest shade, Mrs John

*Mrs John* All right! That's all right! That's what I wanted to know. [*Together with the child she disappears behind the partition*]

*Walburga* Doesn't it strike you, Erich, that Mrs John's behaviour is rather peculiar?

*Spitta* [*Taking WALBURGA's hands and kissing them shyly but passionately*] I don't know, I don't know . Or, at least, my opinion mustn't count to-day The sombre state of my own mind colours all the world. Did you get the letter?

*Walburga* Yes But I couldn't make out why you hadn't been at our house in such a long while

*Spitta* Forgive me, Walburga, but I couldn't come

*Walburga* And why not?

*Spitta* Because my mind was not at one with itself

*Walburga* You want to become an actor? Is that true? You're going to change professions?

*Spitta* What I'll be in the end may be left to God But never a parson—never a country parson!

*Walburga* Listen! I've had my fortune told from the cards

*Spitta* That's nonsense, Walburga. You mustn't do that

*Walburga* I swear to you, Erich, that it isn't nonsense The woman told me I was betrothed in secret and that my betrothed is an actor Of course I laughed her to scorn And immediately after that mama told me that you wanted to be an actor

*Spitta* Is that a fact?

*Walburga* It's true—every bit of it. And in addition the clairvoyant said that we would have a visitor who would cause us much trouble

*Spitta* My father is coming to Berlin, Walburga, and it's undoubtedly true that the old gentleman will give us not a little trouble Father doesn't know it, but my views and his have been worlds asunder for a long time It didn't need these letters of his which seem actually to burn in

my pocket and by which he answered my confession—it didn't need these letters to tell me that

*Walburga* An evil, envious, venomous star presided over our secret meeting here! Oh, how I used to admire my papa! And since that Sunday I blush for him every minute And however much I try, I can't, since that day, look frankly and openly into his eyes

*Spitta* Did you have differences with your father too?

*Walburga* Oh, if it were nothing more than that! I was so proud of papa! And now I tremble to think of even your finding it out You'd despise us!

*Spitta* I despise anyone? Dear child, I can't think of anything less fitting for me! Look here I'll set you an example in the matter of frankness A sister of mine, six years older than I, was governess in a noble family Well, a misfortune happened to her and when she sought refuge in the house of her parents, my Christian father put her out of doors! I believe he thought that Jesus would have done the same And so my sister gradually sank lower and lower and some day we can go and visit her in the little suicides' graveyard near Schildhorn where she finally found rest

*Walburga* [*Puts her arms around SPITTA*] Poor boy, you never told me a word of that

*Spitta* Circumstances have changed now and I speak of it I shall speak of it to papa too even if it causes a breach between us—You're always surprised when I get excited, and that I can't control myself when I see some poor devil being kicked about, or when I see the rabble mistreating some poor fallen girl I have actual hallucinations sometimes I seem to see ghosts in bright daylight and my own sister among them!

[*PAULINE PIPERCARCKA enters, dressed as before Her little face seems to have grown paler and prettier*]

*Pauline* Good mornin'

*Mrs John* [*From behind the partition*] Who's that out there?

*Pauline* Pauline, Mrs John

*Mrs John* Pauline? I don't know no Pauline.

*Pauline* Pauline Pipercarca, Mrs John  
*Mrs John* Who? Oh, well then you c'n wait a minute, Pauline

*Walburga* Good-bye, Mrs John

*Mrs John* [*Emerges from behind the partition and carefully draws the hangings*] That's right I got somethin' to discuss with this here young person So you young folks c'n see about getting out

[*SPITTA and WALBURGA leave hastily* *MRS JOHN locks the door behind them*]

*Mrs John* So it's you, Pauline? An' what is it you want?

*Pauline* What should I be wantin'? Somethin' jus' drove me here! Couldn't wait no longer I has to see how everythin' goes

*Mrs John* How what goes? What's everythin'?

*Pauline* [*With a somewhat bad conscience*] Well, if it's well, if it's gettin' on nicely.

*Mrs John* If what's well? If what's gettin' on nicely?

*Pauline* You oughta know that without my tellin'

*Mrs John* What ought I to know without your tellin' me?

*Pauline* I wants to know if anythin's happened to the child!

*Mrs John* What child? An' what could ha' happened? Talk plainly, will you? There ain't a word o' your crazy chatter that anybody c'n understand!

*Pauline* I ain't sayin' nothin' but what's true, Mrs John

*Mrs John* Well, what is it?

*Pauline* My child

*Mrs John* [*Gives her a terrific box on the ear*] Say that again an' I'll bang my boots about your ears so that you'll think you're the mother o' triplets An' now get outa here! An' don' never dare to show your face here again!

*Pauline* [*Starts to go* *She shakes the door which is locked*] She's beaten me! Help! Help! I don' has to stand that! No! [*Weeping*] Open the door! She's maltreated me, Mrs John has!

*Mrs John* [*Utterly transformed, embraces PAULINE, thus restraining her*] Pauline! For God's sake, Pauline! I don' know what could ha' gotten into me! You jus' be good now an' quiet down an' I'll

beg your pardon What d'you want me to do? I'll get down on my knees if you wants me to! Anythin'! Pauline! Listen! Let me do somethin'!

*Pauline* Why d'you go 'n hit me in the face? I'm goin' to headquarters and say as how you slapped me in the face I'm goin' to headquarters to give notice!

*Mrs John* [*Thrusts her face forward*] Here! You c'n hit me back—right in the face! Then it's all right, then it's evened up

*Pauline* I'm goin' to headquarters

*Mrs John* Yes, then it's evened up You jus' listen to what I says Don't you see it'll be evened up then all right! What d'you want to do? Come on now an' hit me!

*Pauline* What's the good o' that when my cheek is swollen?

*Mrs John* [*Striking herself a blow on the cheek*] There! Now my cheek is swollen too Come on, my girl, hit me an' don' be scared!—An' then you c'n tell me everythin' you got on your heart In the meantime I'll go an' I'll cook for you an' me, Miss Pauline, a good cup o' reel coffee made o' beans—none o' your chicory slop, so help me!

*Pauline* [*Somewhat conciliated*] Why did you has to go an' be so mean an' rough to a poor girl like me, Mrs John?

*Mrs John* That's it—that's jus' what I'd like to know my own self! Come on, Pauline, an' sit down! So! It's all right, I tells you! Sit down! It's fine o' you to come an' see me! How many beatin's didn't I get from my poor mother because sometimes I jus' seemed to go crazy an' not be the same person no more She said to me more'n onct Lass, look out! You'll be doin' for yourself some day! An' maybe she was right, maybe it'll be that way Well now, Pauline, tell me how you are an' how you're gettin' along?

*Pauline* [*Laying down bank-notes and handfuls of silver, without counting them, on the table*] Here is the money I don't need it

*Mrs John* I don' know nothin' about no money, Pauline

*Pauline* Oh, you'll know about the money all right! It's been jus' burnin' into me, that it has! It was like a snake under my pillow . . .

Mrs John Oh, come now .

Paulne Like a snake that crept out when I went to sleep An' it tormented me an' wound itself aroun' me an' squeezed me so that I screamed right out an' my landlady found me lyn' on the bare floor jus' like somebody what's dead

Mrs John You jus' let that be right now, Paulne Take a bit of a drink first of all! *[She pours out a small glassful of brandy]* An' then come an' eat a bite It was my husband's birthday yesterday *[She gets out some coffee-cake of which she cuts an oblong piece]*

Paulne Oh, no, I don' feel like eatin'.

Mrs John That strengthens you, that does you good, you oughta eat that! But I is pleased to see, Paulne, how your fine constitution helped you get back your strength so good

Paulne But now I want to have a look at it, Mrs John

Mrs John What's that? What d'you want to have a look at?

Paulne If I could ha' walked I'd ha' been here long ago I want to see now what I come to see!

*[MRS JOHN, whose almost creeping courtesies have been uttered with lips quiver with fear, pales ominously and keeps silent She goes to the kitchen cabinet, wrenches the coffee handmill out and pours beans into it She sits down, squeezes the mill between her knees, grasps the handle, and stares with a consuming expression of nameless hatred over at PAULNE]*

Mrs John Eh? Oh, yes! What d'you want to see? What d'you want to see now all of a sudden? That what you wanted to throttle with them two hands o' yours, eh?

Paulne Me?

Mrs John D'you want to lie about it? I'll go and give notice about you!

Paulne Now you've tormented me an' jabbed at me an' tortured me enough, Mrs John You followed me up, you wouldn' leave me no rest where I went Till I brought my child into the world on a heap o' rags up in your loft You gave me all kinds o' hopes an' you scared me with that rascal of a feller up there! You

told my fortune for me outa the cards about my intended an' you baited me an' hounded me till I was most crazy

Mrs John An' that's what you are Yes, you're as crazy as you c'n be I tormented you, eh? Is that what I did? I picked you up outa the gutter! I fetched you outa the midst of a blizzard when you was standin' by the chronometer an' stared at the lamplighter with eyes that was that desperate scared! You oughta seen yourself! An' I hounded you, eh? Yes, to prevent the police an' the police-waggon an' the devil hisself from catchin' you! I left you no rest, eh? I tortured you, did I? to keep you from jumpin' into the river with the child in your womb! *[Mocking her]* "I'll throw myself into the canal, mother John! I'll choke the child to death! I'll kill the little crittur with my hat pin! I'll go an' run to where its father plays the zither, right in the midst o' the saloon, an' I'll throw the dead child at his feet!" That's what you said, that's the way you talked—all the blessed day long and sometimes half the night too till I put you to bed an' petted you an' stroked you till you went to sleep An' you didn't wake up again till next day on the stroke o' twelve, when the bells was ringin' from all the churches Yes, that's the way I scared you, an' then gave you hope again, an' didn't give you no peace! You forgot all that there, eh?

Paulne But it's my child, Mrs John

Mrs John *[Screams]* You go an' get your child outa the canal! *[She jumps up and walks hastily about the room, picking up and throwing aside one object after another]*

Paulne Ain't I goin' to be allowed to see my child even?

Mrs John Jump into the water an' get it there! Then you'll have it! I ain't keepin' you back. God knows!

Paulne All right! You c'n slap me, you c'n beat me, you c'n throw things at my head if you wants to Betore I don't know where my child is an' before I ain't seen it with my own eyes, nothin' an' nobody ain't goin' to get me away from this place

Mrs John *[Interrupting her]* Paulne, I put it out to nurse!

Paulne That's a lie! Don't I hear it

smackin' its lips right behind that there partition [*The child behind the partition begins to cry* PAULINE hastens toward it *She exclaims with pathetic tearfulness, obviously forcing the note of motherhood a little*] Don' you cry, my poor, poor little boy! Little mother's comin' to you now!

[MRS JOHN, almost beside herself, has sprung in front of the door, thus blocking PAULINE'S way]

Pauline [*Whining helplessly but with clenched fists*] Lemme go in an' see my child!

Mrs John [*A terrible change coming over her face*] Look at me, girl! Come here an' look me in the eye!—D'you think you c'n play tricks on a woman that looks the way I do? [PAULINE sits down still moaning] Sit down an' howl an' whine till . . . till your throat's swollen so you can't give a groan. But if you gets in here—then you'll be dead or I'll be dead an' the child—he won't be alive no more neither.

Pauline [*Rises with some determination*] Then look out for what'll happen.

Mrs John [*Attempting to pacify the girl once more*] Pauline, this business was all settled between us. Why d'you want to go an' burden yourself with the child what's my child now an' is in the best hands possible? What d'you want to do with it? Why don't you go to your intended? You two'll have somethin' better to do than listen to a child cryin' an' takin' all the care an' trouble he needs!

Pauline No, that ain't the way it is! He's gotta marry me now! They all says so—Mrs Kielbacke, when I had to take treatment, she said so. They says I'm not to give in, he has to marry me. An' the registrar he advised me too. That's what he said an' he was mad, too, when I told him how I sneaked up into a loft to have my baby! He cried out loud that I wasn't to let up! Poor, maltreated crittur—that's what he called me an' he put his hand in his pocket an' gave me three crowns! All right. So we needn't quarrel no more, Mrs John. I jus' come anyhow to tell you to be at home to-morrow afternoon at five o'clock. An' why? Because to-morrow an official examiner'll come to look after things here. I don't has to worry myself with you no more . . .

Mrs John [*Moveless and shocked beyond expression*] What? You went an' give notice at the public registry?

Pauline. O' course? Does I want to go to gaol?

Mrs John An' what did you tell the registrar?

Pauline Nothin' but that I give birth to a boy. An' I was so ashamed! Oh my God, I got red all over! I thought I'd just have to go through the floor.

Mrs John Is that so? Well, if you was so ashamed why did you go an' give notice?

Pauline. 'Cause my landlady an' Mrs Kielbacke, too, what took me there, didn't give me no rest.

Mrs John H-m. So they knows it now at the public registry?

Pauline Yes, they had to know, Mrs John!

Mrs John. Didn't I tell you over an' over again?

Pauline You gotta give notice o' that! D'you want me to be put in gaol for a investagation?

Mrs John I told you as how I'd give notice.

Pauline I axed the registrar right off. Nobody hadn't been there.

Mrs John An' what did you say exackly?

Pauline That his name was to be Aloysius Theophil an' that he was boardin' with you.

Mrs John An' to-morrow an officer'll be comin' in.

Pauline He's a gentleman from the guardian's office. What's the matter with that? Why don't you keep still an' act sensible. You scared me most to death a while ago!

Mrs John [*As if absent-minded*] That's right. There ain't nothin' to be done about that now. An' there ain't so much to that, after all, maybe.

Pauline All right. An' now c'n I see my child, Mrs John?

Mrs John Not to-day. Wait till to-morrow, Pauline.

Pauline Why not to-day?

Mrs John Because no good'd come of it this day. Wait till to-morrow, five o'clock in the afternoon.

Pauline That's it. My landlady says it was written that way, that a gentlemen

from the city'll be here to-morrow afternoon five o'clock

Mrs John [*Pushing PAULINE out and herself going out of the room with her, in the same detached tone*] All right Let him come, girl

[MRS JOHN has gone out into the hall for a moment She now returns without PAULINE She seems strangely changed and absent-minded She takes a few hasty steps toward the door of the partition, then stands still with an expression of fruitless brooding on her face She interrupts herself in this brooding and runs to the window Having reached it she turns and on her face there reappears the expression of dull detachment. Slowly, like a somnambulist, she walks up to the table and sits down beside it, leaning her chin on her hand SELMA KNOBBE appears in the doorway]

Selma Mother's asleep, Mrs John, an' I'm that hungry Might I have a bite o' bread?

[MRS JOHN rises mechanically and cuts a slice from the loaf of bread with the air of one under an hypnotic influence]

Selma [*Observing MRS JOHN's state of mind*] It's me! What's the matter, Mrs John? Whatever you do, don't cut yourself with the bread knife

Mrs John [*Lets the loaf and the bread-knife slip involuntarily from her hand to the table A dry sobbing overwhelms her more and more*] Fear!—Trouble!—You don't know nothin' about that! [*She trembles and grasps after some support*]

### ACT THREE

The same decoration as in the first act The lamp is lit The dim light of a hanging lamp illuminates the passage

HASSENREUTER is giving his three pupils, SPITTA, DR KEGEL and KÄFERSTEIN instruction in the art of acting He himself is seated at the table, uninterruptedly opening letters and beating time to the rhythm of the verses with a paper cutter In front of him stand, facing each other, KEGEL and

KÄFERSTEIN on one side, SPITTA on the other, thus representing the two choruses in Schiller's "Bride of Messina" The young men stand in the midst of a diagram drawn with chalk on the floor and separated, like a chess-board, into sixty-four rectangles On the high stool in front of the office desk WALBURGA is sitting Waiting in the background stands the house steward QUARARO, who might be the manager of a wandering circus and, in the capacity of athlete, its main attraction His speech is uttered in a guttural tenor He wears bedroom slippers His breeches are held up by an embroidered belt An open shirt, fairly clean, a light jacket, a cap now held in his hand, complete his attire

Dr Kegel and Kaferstein [*Mouthing the verses sonorously and with exaggerated dignity*]

"Thee salute I with reverence,  
Lordliest chamber,  
Thee, my high rulers'  
Princeliest cradle,  
Column-supported, magnificent roof.  
Deep in its scabbard . . ."

Hassenreuter [*Cries in a rage*] Pause! Period! Period! Pause! Period! You're not turning the crank of a hurdy-gurdy! The chorus in the "Bride of Messina" is no hand-organ tune! "Thee salute I with reverence!" Start over again from the beginning, gentlemen! "Thee salute I with reverence, Lordliest chamber!" Something like that, gentlemen! "Deep in its scabbard let the sword rest" Period! "Magnificent roof" I meant to say Period! But you may go on if you want to.

Dr Kegel and Kaferstein.

"Deep in its scabbard  
Let the sword rest  
Fettered fast by your gateway  
Moveless may lie Strife's snaky-locked monster

For . . ."

Hassenreuter [*As before*] Hold on! Don't you know the meaning of a full stop, gentlemen? Haven't you any knowledge of the elements? "Snaky-haired monster" Period! Imagine that a pile is driven there! You've got to stop, to pause There must be silence like the silence of the dead! You've got to imagine yourself wiped out of existence for the moment,

Kaferstein And then—out with your best trumpeting chest-notes! Hold on! Don't lisp, for God's sake "For . . ." Go on now! Start!

*Dr Kegel and Kaferstein.*

"For this hospitable house's  
Inviolable threshold

Guardeth an oath, the Furies'  
child . . ."

*Hassenreuter* [*Jumps up, and runs about and roars*] Oath, oath, oath, oath!!! Don't you know what an oath is, Kaferstein? "Guardeth an oath!!—the Furies' child" This oath is said to be the child of the Furies, Dr Kegel! You've got to use your voice! The audience, to the last usher, has got to be one vast quivering gooseflesh when you say that! One shiver must run through every bone in the house! Listen to me "For this house's . . . threshold Guardeth an oath!!! The Furies' child, The fearfullest of the infernal deities!"—Go ahead! Don't repeat these verses But you can stop long enough to observe that an oath and a Munich beer radish are, after all, two different things

*Spitta* [*Declaims*]

"Treful my heart in my bossom burneth . . ."

*Hassenreuter* Hold on! [*He runs up to SPITTA and pushes and nudges the latter's arms and legs in order to produce the desired tragic pose*]—First of all, you lack the requisite statuesqueness of posture, my dear Spitta The dignity of a tragic character is in nowise expressed in you Then you did not, as I expressly desired you to do, advance your right foot from the field marked ID into that marked IIC! Finally, Mr Quaquaro is waiting, so let us interrupt ourselves for a moment So, now I'm at your service, Mr Quaquaro That is to say, I asked you to come up because, in making my inventory, it became clear that several cases and boxes cannot be found or, in other words, have been stolen Now, before lodging information with the authorities which, of course, I am determined to do, I wanted first to get your advice I wanted to do that all the more because, in place of the lost cases, there was found, in a corner of the attic, a very peculiar mess—a find that could appropriately be sent to Dr Virchow First there was a blue feather-duster, truly prehistoric, and an in-

expressible vessel, the use of which, quite harmless in itself, is equally inexpressible

*Quaquaro* Well, sir, I can climb up there if you want me to

*Hassenreuter* Suppose you do that Up there you'll meet Mrs John, whom the find in question has disquieted even more than it has me These three gentlemen, who are my pupils, won't be persuaded that something very like a murder didn't take place up there But, if you please, let's not cause a scandal!

*Kaferstein* When something got lost in my mother's shop in Schneidemuhl, it was always said that the rats had eaten it And really, when you consider the number of rats and mice in this house—I very nearly stepped on one on the stairs a while ago—why shouldn't we suppose that the cases of costumes were devoured in the same way Silk is said to be sweet

*Hassenreuter* Very excellent! Very good! You're relieved from the necessity of indulging in any more notion-shopkeepers' fancies, my good Kaferstein! Ha, ha, ha! It only remains for you to dish up for us the story of the cavalry man Sorgenfrei, who, according to your assertion, when this house was still a cavalry barracks, hanged himself—spurred and armed—in my loft And then the last straw would be for you to direct our suspicions toward him

*Kaferstein* You can still see the very nail he used

*Quaquaro* There ain't a soul in the house what don't know the story of the soldier Sorgenfrei who put an end to himself with a rope somewhere under the roof-tree

*Kaferstein* The carpenter's wife downstairs and a seamstress in the second story have repeatedly seen him by broad daylight nodding out of the attic window and bowing down with military demeanour

*Quaquaro* A corporal, they says, called the soldier Sorgenfrei a windbag an' gave him a blow outa spite An' the idjit took that to heart

*Hassenreuter* Ha, ha, ha! Military brutalities and ghost stories! That mixture is original, but hardly to our purpose I assume that the theft, or whatever it was, took place during those eleven or twelve days that I spent on business in Alsace



So look the matter over and have the goodness, later, to report to me

[HASSENREUTER turns to his pupils  
QUAQUARO mounts the stars to  
the loft and disappears behind  
the trap-door]

Hassenreuter All right, my good Spitta  
Fire away!

[SPITTA recites simply according to the  
sense and without any tragic bombast]

"Ireful my heart in my bosom burneth,  
My hand is ready for sword or lance,  
For unto me the Gorgon turneth  
My foeman's hateful countenance  
Scarce I master the rage that assails me  
Shall I salute him with fair speech?  
Better, perchance, my ire avails me?  
Only the Fury me affrighteth,  
Protectress of all within her reach,  
And God's truce which all foes uniteth"

Hassenreuter [Who has sat down, supports his head on his hand and listens resignedly Not until SPITTA has ceased speaking for some moments does he look up, as if coming to himself] Are you quite through, Spitta? If so, I'm much obliged!—You see, my dear fellow, I've really gotten into a deuce of a situation as far as you are concerned either I tell you impudently to your face that I consider your method of elocution excellent—and in that case I'd be guilty of a lie of the most contemptible kind, or else I tell you that I consider it abominable and then we'd get into another beastly row

Spitta [Turning pale] Yes, all this stilted, rhetorical stuff is quite foreign to my nature That's the very reason why I abandoned theology The preacher's tone is repulsive to me

Hassenreuter And so you would like to reel off these tragic choruses as a clerk of court mumbles a document or a waiter a bill of fare?

Spitta I don't care for the whole sonorous bombast of the "Bride of Messina"

Hassenreuter I wish you'd repeat that charming opinion

Spitta There's nothing to be done about it, sir Our conceptions of dramatic art diverge utterly, in some respects

Hassenreuter Man alive, at this particular moment your face is a veritable monogram of megalomania and impudence! I beg your pardon, but you're my pupil now

and no longer the tutor of my children. Your views and mine! You ridiculous tyro! You and Schiller! Friedrich Schiller! I've told you a hundred times that your puerile little views of art are nothing but an innate striving toward imbecility!

Spitta You would have to prove that to me, after all

Hassenreuter You prove it yourself every time you open your mouth! You deny the whole art of elocution, the value of the voice in acting! You want to substitute for both the art of toneless squeaking! Further you deny the importance of action in the drama and assert it to be a worthless accident, a sop for the groundlings! You deny the validity of poetic justice, of guilt and its necessary expiation You call all that a vulgar invention—an assertion by means of which the whole moral order of the world is abrogated by the learned and crooked understanding of your single magnificent self! Of the heights of humanity you know nothing! You asserted the other day that, in certain circumstances, a barber or a scrubwoman might as fittingly be the protagonist of a tragedy as Lady Macbeth or King Lear!

Spitta [Still pale, polishing his spectacles] Before art as before the law all men are equal, sir

Hassenreuter Aha? Is that so? Where did you pick up that banality?

Spitta [Without permitting himself to be disconcerted] The truth of that saying has become my second nature In believing it I probably find myself at variance with Schiller and Gustav Freytag, but not at all with Lessing and Diderot I have spent the past two semesters in the study of these two great dramaturgic critics, and the whole stilted French pseudo-classicism is, as far as I'm concerned, utterly destroyed—not only in creative art itself but in such manifestations as the boundless folly of the directions for acting which Goethe prescribed in his old age These are mere superannuated nonsense

Hassenreuter You don't mean it?

Spitta And if the German stage is ever to recuperate it must go back to the young Schiller, the young Goethe—the author of "Gotz"—and ever again to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing! There you will find set down principles of dramatic art which are



thing like that Erich Spitta that's my son And I'm obliged to say that with deep sorrow

*Hassenreuter* First of all, I'm very glad to have the privilege of your acquaintance I hasten at once to beg you, however, dear Pastor, not to be too much worried, not to be too sorrowful concerning the little escapade in which your son is indulging

*Pastor Spitta* Oh, but I am greatly troubled I am deeply grieved [*Sitting down on a chair he surveys the strange place in which he finds himself with considerable interest*] It is hard to say; it is extremely difficult to communicate to any one the real depth of anxiety But forgive me a question, sir I was in the trophy-chamber—[*He touches one of the armored dummies with his cane*] What kind of armor is this?

*Hassenreuter* These figures are to represent the cuirassiers in Schiller's "Wallenstein"

*Pastor Spitta* Ah, ah, my idea of Schiller was so very different! [*Collecting himself*] Oh, this city of Berlin! It confuses me utterly You see a man before you, sir, who is not only grieved, whom this Sodom of a city has not only stirred to his very depths, but who is actually broken-hearted by the deed of his son

*Hassenreuter* A deed? What deed?

*Pastor Spitta* Is there any need to ask? The son of an honest man desiring to become an an an actor!

*Hassenreuter* [*Drawing himself up With the utmost dignity*] My dear sir, I do not approve of your son's determination But I am myself—*honnête homme*—the son of an honest man and myself, I trust, a man of honour And I, whom you see before you, have been an actor, too No longer than six weeks ago I took part in the Luther celebration—for I am no less an apostle of culture in the broadest sense—not only as manager but by ascending the boards on which the world is shadowed forth as an actor! From my point of view, therefore, your son's determination is scarcely open to objection on the score of his social standing or his honourable character But it is a difficult calling and demands, above all, a high degree of talent I am also willing to admit that it is a calling not without peculiar

dangers to weak characters And finally I have myself proved the unspeakable hardships of my profession so thoroughly that I would like to guard anyone else from entering it That is the reason why I box my daughters' ears if the slightest notion of going on the stage seizes them, and why I would rather tie stones about their necks and drown them where the sea is deepest than see them marry actors

*Pastor Spitta* I didn't mean to wound any one's feelings I admit, too, that a simple country parson like myself can't very well have much of a conception of such things But consider a father now—just such a poor country parson—who has saved and hoarded his pennies in order that his son might have a career at the university Now consider, further, that this son is just about to take his final examinations and that his father and his mother—I have a sick wife at home—are looking forward with anxiety and with longing, whichever you call it, toward the moment in which their son will mount the pulpit and deliver the trial sermon before the congregation of his choice And then comes this letter Why, the boy is mad!

[*The emotion of the PASTOR is not exactly consciously directed, it is controlled The trembling of the hand with which he searches for the letter in his inner pocket and hands it to the manager is not quite convincing*]

*Hassenreuter* Young men search after various aims We musn't be too much taken by surprise if, once in a while, a crisis of this kind is not to be avoided in a young man's life

*Pastor Spitta* Well, this crisis was avoidable It will not be difficult for you to see from this letter who is responsible for this destructive change in the soul of a young, an excellent, and hitherto thoroughly obedient youth I should never have sent him to Berlin Yes, it is this so-called scientific theology, this theology that flirts with all the pagan philosophers, that would change the Lord our God into empty smoke and sublimate our blessed Saviour into thin air—it is this that I hold responsible for the grievous mistake of my child And to this may be added other temptations I tell you, sir, I have seen things which it is im-

possible for me to speak of! I have circulars in every pocket—"Ball of the Elite! Smart waitresses!" and so on! I was quietly walking, at half past twelve one night, through the arcade that connects Friedrich street with the Linden, and a disgusting fellow sidles up to me, wretched, undergrown, and asks me with a kind of greasy, shifty impudence Doesn't the gentleman want something real fetching? And these show windows in which, right by the pictures of noble and exalted personages, naked actresses, dancers, in short the most shocking nudities are displayed! And finally this Corso—oh, this Corso! Where painted and bedizened vice jostles respectable women from the sidewalk! It's simply the end of the world!

*Hassenreuter* Ah, my dear Pastor, the world doesn't so easily come to an end—nor, surely, will it do so on account of the nudities that offend or of the vice which slinks through the streets at night The world will probably outlive me and the whole scurrilous interlude of humanity

*Pastor Spitta* What turns these young people aside from the right path is evil example and easy opportunity

*Hassenreuter* I beg your pardon, Pastor, but I have not observed in your son the slightest inclination toward leading a frivolous life He is simply attracted to literature, and he isn't the first clergyman's son—remember merely Lessing and Herder—who has taken the road of literary study and creative art Very likely he has manuscript plays in his desk even now To be sure, I am bound to admit that the opinions which your son defends in the field of literature frighten even me at times!

*Pastor Spitta* But that's horrible! That's frightful! That far exceeds my worst fears! And so my eyes have been opened—My dear sir, I have had eight children, of whom Erich seemed our fairest hope and his next-oldest sister our heaviest trial And now, it seems, the same accursed city has demanded them both as its victims The girl developed prematurely, she was beautiful and But I must mention another circumstance now I have been in Berlin for three days and I haven't seen Erich yet When I tried to see him to-day, he was not at home in his rooms I waited for a while and naturally looked about me

in my son's dwelling And now, look at this picture, sir! [*Replacing ERICH's letter in his pocket he extracts therefrom a small photograph and holds it immediately under HASSENREUTER's eyes*]

*Hassenreuter* [*Takes the picture and holds it at varying distances from him. He is disconcerted*] Why should I look at this?

*Pastor Spitta* The silly little face is of no importance But pray look at the inscription

*Hassenreuter* Where?

*Pastor Spitta* [*Reads*] "From Walburga to her only sweetheart"

*Hassenreuter* Permit me!—What's the meaning of this?

*Pastor Spitta* It simply means some seamstress if not, what is worse, some shady waitress!

*Hassenreuter*. H-m [*He slips the picture into his pocket*] I shall keep this photograph

*Pastor Spitta* It is in such filth that my son wallows And consider the situation in which it puts me with what feelings, with what front shall I henceforward face my congregation from the pulpit . . ?

*Hassenreuter* Confound it, what business is that of mine? What have I to do with your offspring, with your lost sons and daughters? [*He pulls out the photograph again*] And furthermore, as far as this excellent and sound-hearted young lady is concerned, you're quite mistaken in your ideas about waitresses and such like. I'll say nothing more All other matters will adjust themselves Good-bye

*Pastor Spitta* I confess frankly, I don't understand you Probably this tone is the usual one in your circles I will go and not annoy you any longer But as a father I have the right, before God, to demand of you that henceforth you refuse to my deluded son this so-called dramatic instruction I hope I shall not have to look for further ways and means of enforcing this demand

*Hassenreuter* I won't only do that, but I'll actually put him out of doors [*He accompanies the PASTOR to the door, slams it behind him and returns alone*]

*Hassenreuter* [*Waving his arms through the air*] All that one can say here is Plain parson! [*He rushes halfway up the*

*stairs to the loft*] Spitta! Walburga! Come down here, will you?

[WALBURGA and SPITTA come down]

Hassenreuter [To WALBURGA, who looks at him questioningly] Go to your high stool over there and sit down on the humorous part of your anatomy! Well, and you, my dear Spitta, what do you want?

Spitta You called us both, sir.

Hassenreuter Exactly. Now look me in the eye!

Spitta Certainly

[He looks straight at HASSENREUTER]

Hassenreuter You two want to make an ass of me But you won't succeed! Silence! Not a word! I would have expected something very different from you! This is a striking proof of ingratitude Keep still! Furthermore, a gentleman was here just now! That gentleman is afraid in Berlin! March! Follow him! Take him down into the street and try to make it clear to him that I'm neither your boot-black nor his

[SPITTA shrugs his shoulders, takes his hat and goes]

Hassenreuter [Strides up to WALBURGA energetically and tweaks her ear] And as for you, my dear, you'll have your ears soundly boxed if ever again without my permission you exchange two words with this rascal of a theologian gone to smash!

Walburga Ouch, papa, ouch!

Hassenreuter This fellow who is fond of making such an innocent face as if he couldn't harm a fly and whom I was careless enough to admit to my house is, unfortunately, a man behind whose mask the most shameless impudence lies in wait I and my house are in the service of true propriety Do you want to besmire the escutcheon of our honour as the sister of this fellow seems to have done—a girl who disgraced her parents by coming to an end in the street and the gutter?

Walburga. I don't share your opinion about Erich, papa

Hassenreuter. What's that? Well, at least you know my opinion Either you give him his walking papers or else you can look out for yourself and find out what it is to get along, away from your parental roof, in a way of life regardless of honour, duty and decency! In that case you can

go! I have no use for daughters of that kind!

Walburga [Pale and sombre] You are always saying, papa, that you too had to make your way independently and without your parents

Hassenreuter. You're not a man

Walburga Certainly not But think, for instance, of Alice Rutterbusch

[Father and daughter look firmly into each other's eyes]

Hassenreuter. Why should I? Have you a fever, eh? Or have you gone mad? [He drops the whole discussion, noticeably put out of countenance, and taps at the library door] Where did we leave off? Begin at the proper place

[KEGEL and KÄFERSTEIN appear]

Kegel and Käferstein [Declaim]

"A wiser temper

Beseemeth age

I, being reasonable,

Salute him first"

[Led and directed by SPITTA appear PAULINE PIPERCARCKA in street dress and MRS KIELBACKE, who carries an infant on a pillow]

Hassenreuter What do you want here? What kind of women are you bringing here to annoy me?

Spitta It isn't my fault, sir The women insisted on coming to you

Mrs Kielbacke No, all we wants is to see Mrs John

Pauline An' Mrs John she's always up here with you!

Hassenreuter True But I'm beginning to regret the fact, and I must insist, at all events, that she hold her private receptions in her own rooms and not here Otherwise I'll soon equip the door here with patent locks and mantraps—What's the matter with you, my good Spitta? I suppose you'll have to have the goodness to show these ladies the place they really want to go to

Pauline But Mrs John ain't to be found in her rooms downstairs

Hassenreuter Well, she's not to be found up here either

Mrs Kielbacke The reason is because this here young lady has her little son boardin' with Mrs John

Hassenreuter Glad to hear it! Please

march now without further delay! Save me, Kaferstein!

*Mrs Krielsacke* An' now a gentleman's come from the city, from the office of the government guardian office to see how the child is an' if it's well taken care of an' in good condition. An' then he went into Mrs John's room an' we went with him. An' there was the child an' a note pinned to it what said that Mrs John was workin' for you up here.

*Hassenreuter* Where was the child boardin'g?

*Mrs Krielsacke* With Mrs John.

*Hassenreuter* [*Impatiently*] That's simply a piece of imbecility. You are quite wrong—Spitta, you would have been much better employed accompanying the old gentleman after whom I sent you than aiding these ladies to come here.

*Spitta* I looked for the gentleman you speak of but he was already gone.

*Hassenreuter*. These ladies don't seem to believe me. Will you kindly inform them, gentlemen, that Mrs John has no child in board, and that they are quite obviously mistaken in the name.

*Kaferstein* I am asked to tell you that you are probably mistaken in the name.

*Pauline* [*Vehemently and tearfully*] She has got my baby! She had my baby boardin' with her. An' the gentleman came from the city an' he said that the child wasn't in no good hands an' that it was neglected. She went an' ruined my baby's health.

*Hassenreuter* There is no doubt but what you have mistaken the name of the woman of whom you speak. Mrs John has no child in board.

*Pauline* She had my baby in her claws, that's what! An' she let it starve an' get sick! I gotta see her! I gotta tell her right out! She's gotta make my little baby well again! I gotta go to court. The gentleman says as how I gotta go to court an' give notice.

*Hassenreuter* I beg of you not to get excited. The fact is that you are mistaken! How did you ever hit on the idea that Mrs John has a child in board?

*Pauline* Because I gave it to her myself.

*Hassenreuter* But Mrs John has her own child and it just occurs to me that she has

taken it along with her on a visit to her sister-in-law.

*Pauline* She ain't got no child. No, Mrs John ain't got none! She cheats an' she lies. She ain't got none. She took my little Alois an' she ruined him.

*Hassenreuter* By heaven, ladies, you are mistaken!

*Pauline* Nobody won't believe me that I had a baby. My intended he wrote me a letter an' he says it ain't true an' that I'm a liar an' a low creature. [*She touches the pillow on which the infant is resting*] It's mine an' I'll prove it in court! I c'n swear it by the holy Mother o' God.

*Hassenreuter* Do uncover the child. [*It is done and Hassenreuter observes the infant attentively*].—H'm, the matter will not remain long in obscurity. In the first place

I know Mrs John. If she had had this child in board it could never look as it does. And that is true quite simply because, where it is a question of children, Mrs John has her heart in the right place.

*Pauline* I want to see Mrs John. That's all I says. I don't has to tell my business to everybody in the world. I c'n tell everythin' in court, down to the least thing—the day an' the hour an' jus' exactly the place where it was born! People is goin' to open their eyes, you c'n believe me.

*Hassenreuter* What you assert, then, if I understand you rightly, is that Mrs John has no baby of her own at all, and that the one which passes as such is in reality yours.

*Pauline* God strike me dead if that ain't the truth!

*Hassenreuter* And this is the child in question? I trust that God won't take you at your word this time—You must know that I, who stand before you, am manager Hassenreuter and I have personally had in my own hands the child of Mrs John, my charwoman, on three or four occasions. I even weighed it on the scales and found it to weigh over eight pounds. This poor little creature doesn't weigh over four pounds. And on the basis of this fact I can assure you that this child is not, at least, the child of Mrs John. You may be right in asserting that it is yours. I am in no position to throw doubt on that. But I know Mrs John's child and I am quite sure that it is, in no wise, identical with this.

*Mrs Kielbacke* [*Respectfully*] No, no, that's right enough It ain't identical

*Paulne* This baby here is identical enough all right, even if it's a bit underfed an' weakly This business with the child is all straight enough! I'll take an oath that it's identical all right

*Hassenreuter* I am simply speechless. [*To his pupils*] Our lesson is ruled by an evil star to-day, my dear boys. I don't know why, but the error which these ladies are making engrosses me [*To the women*] You may have entered the wrong door

*Mrs Kielbacke* No, me an' the gentleman from the guardian's office an' the young lady went an' fetched this here child outa the room what has the name plate o' Mrs John on it, an' took it out into the hall Mrs John wasn't there an' her husband the mason is absent in Hamburg

[*POLICEMAN SCHIERKE comes in, fat and good-natured*]

*Hassenreuter* Ah, there's Mr Schierke! What do you want here?

*Schierke* I understand, sir, that two women fled up here to you

*Mrs Kielbacke* We ain't fled at all

*Hassenreuter* They were inquiring for Mrs John

*Schierke* May I be permitted to ax something too?

*Hassenreuter* If you please

*Paulne* Jus' let him ax We don't has to worry

*Schierke* [*To MRS KIELBACKE*] What's your name?

*Mrs Kielbacke* I'm Mrs Kielbacke

*Schierke* You're connected with the society for raisin' children, eh? Where do you live?

*Mrs Kielbacke* Linien street number nine

*Schierke* Is that your child that you have there?

*Mrs Kielbacke* That's Miss Pipercarcka her child

*Schierke* [*To PAULINE*] An' your name?

*Paulne* Paula Pipercarcka from Skorzenn

*Schierke* This woman asserts that the child is yours Do you assert that too?

*Paulne* Sergeant, I has to ax for your protection because suspicions is cast on me an' I'm innercent. The gentleman from the

city did come to me An' I did get my child outa the room o' Mrs. John what I had it in board with . .

*Schierke* [*With a searching look*] Yes? Maybe it was the door across the way where the restaurant keeper's widow Knobbe lives Nobody knows what you're up to with that child nor who sent you an' bribed you You ain't got a good conscience! You took the child an' slipped up here with it while its rightful mother, the widow Knobbe, what it's been stolen from, is huntin' all over the stairs an' halls for it an' while a detective is standin' acrost the way

*Paulne*. I don't care about no detective I'm . .

*Hassenreuter* You are refuted, my good girl Can't you comprehend that? First you say that Mrs John has no child Next you say—kindly attend to me—that you had taken your child, which has been passing for Mrs John's, out of the latter's room However all of us here happen to know Mrs John's child and the one you have here is another Is that clear to you? Hence your assertion cannot, in any circumstances, be a correct one!—And now, Schierke, you would do me a favor if you would conduct these ladies out so that I can continue giving my lesson

*Schierke* All right, but if I does that we'll get into that Knobbe crowd Because her child has been stolen

*Paulne* It ain't me that done it, it's Mrs John

*Schierke* That's all right [*Continuing his account to HASENREUTER*] And they says that the child has blue blood in it on its father's side So Mrs Knobbe thinks as how it's a plot of enemies 'cause they grudges her the alimony in some quarters an' a gentleman's eddication for the kid. [*Someone is beating at the door with fists*] That's the Knobbe woman There she comes now!

*Hassenreuter* Mr Schierke, you are responsible to me If these people trespass on my premises and I suffer any damages thereby, I'll complain to the chief of police I know Mr Maddei very well Don't be afraid, my dear boys You are my witnesses

*Schierke* [*At the door*] You stay out there! You don't get in here!

[A small mob howls outside of the door]

*Pauline* They c'n holler all they wants to but they can't get my child

*Hassenreuter* Perhaps this is the better way You go into the library for the present [He escorts PAULINE, MRS KIELBACKE and the child into the library] And now, Mr Schierke, we might risk letting that fury enter in here

*Schierke* [Opening the door slightly] All right But only Mrs Knobbe! Come in here a minute

[MRS SIDONIE KNOBBE appears She is tall and emaciated and dressed in a badly worn but fashionable summer gown Her face bears the stigma of a dissolute life but gives evidence of a not ungentle origin Her air is curiously like that of a gentlewoman She talks affectedly and her eyes show addiction to alcohol and morphine]

*Mrs Knobbe* [Sailing in] There is no cause for any anxiety, Mr Hassenreuter Those without are principally little boys and girls who have come with me because I am fond of children Pray pardon me if I intrude One of the children told me that two women had sneaked up here with my little boy I am looking for my little son, named Helfgott Gundofried, who has actually disappeared from my dwelling At the same time I do not wish to incommode you

*Schierke* An' you better not do that if I has any say about it

*Mrs Knobbe* [Disregarding these words except by a proud toss of the head] To my great regret I caused a certain amount of disturbance in the yard From the yard as a place of vantage it is possible to command every window and I made inquires of the poor cigar maker in the second story and of the consumptive little seamstress in the third as to whether my Selma and my little son were with either of them But nothing is farther from my intention than to create a scandal I want you to know—for I am quite conscious of being in the presence of a distinguished, indeed, of a famous man—you are to know that where Helfgott Gundofried is concerned I am obliged to be strictly on my guard! [With quivering voice and an occasional applica-

tion of her handkerchief to her eyes] I am an unfortunate woman who is pursued by fate, who has sunk low but who has seen better days I do not care to bore you with my troubles But I am being pursued and there are those who would rob me of my last hope

*Schierke* Aw, hurry up an' say what you has to!

*Mrs Knobbe* [As before] It is not enough that I was forced to lay aside my honest name Later I lived in Paris and then married a brutal person, a south German inn-keeper, because I had the foolish thought that my affairs might be bettered thereby O these scoundrels of men!

*Schierke* This don't lead to nothin'! You cut it short, I tell you

*Mrs Knobbe* But I am glad of the opportunity of standing, once more, face to face with a man of culture and intellect I could a tale unfold Popularly I am known here as "the countess" and God is my witness that in my earlier youth I was not far removed from that estate! For a time I was an actress, too What did I say! I could unfold a tale from my life, from my past, which would have the advantage of not being invented!

*Schierke* Maybe not Nobody c'n tell

*Mrs Knobbe* [With renewed emphasis] My wretchedness is not invented, although it may seem so when I relate how, one night, sunk in the deepest abysses of my shame, I met on the street a cousin—the playmate of my youth—who is now captain in the horse-guards He lives in the world I live in the underworld ever since my father from pride of rank and race disowned me because in my earliest youth I had made a mistake Oh, you have no conception of the dullness, the coarseness, the essential vulgarity that obtains in those circles I am a trodden worm, sir, and yet not for a moment do I yearn to be there, in that glittering wretchedness . . .

*Schierke* Maybe you don't mind comin' to the point now!

*Hassenreuter* If you please, Mr Schierke, all that interests me So suppose you don't interrupt the lady for a while [To MRS KNOBBE] You were speaking of your cousin Didn't you say that he is a captain in the horse-guards?

*Mrs Knobbe* He was in plain clothes



He is, however, a captain in the horse-guards. He recognized me at once and we dedicated some blessed though painful hours to memories. Accompanying him there was—I will not call his name—a very young lieutenant, a fair, sweet boy, delicate and brooding. Mr. Hassenreuter, I have forgotten what shame is! Was I not even, the other day, turned out of church? Why should a down-trodden, dishonoured, deserted creature, more than once punished by the laws—why should such an one hesitate to confess that *he* became the father of Helfgott Gundofried?

*Hassenreuter* Of this baby that's been stolen from you?

*Mrs Knobbe* Yes, stolen! At least it is so asserted! It may be! But though my enemies are mighty and have every means at their command, I am not yet wholly convinced of it. And yet it may be a plot concocted by the parents of the child's father whose name you would be astonished to hear, for they represent one of the oldest and most illustrious families. Farewell! Whatever you may hear of me, sir, do not think that my better feelings have been wholly extinguished in the mire into which I am forced to cast myself. I need this mire in which I am on terms of equality with the dregs of mankind. Here, look! [*She thrusts forward her naked arm*] Forgetfulness! Insensibility! I achieve it by means of chloral, of opium. Or I find it in the abysses of human life. And why not? To whom am I responsible?—There was a time when my dear mama was scolded by my father on my account! The maid had convulsions because of me! Mademoiselle and an English governess tore each other's *chignons* from their heads because each asserted that I loved *her* best—! Now...

*Schierke*. Aw, I tell you to shut it now! We can't take up people's time an' look 'em up. [*He opens the library door*] Now tell us if this here is your kid?

[*PAULINE, staring at MRS KNOBBE with eyes full of hatred, comes out first. MRS KIELBACKE, carrying the child, comes next. SCHIERKE removes the shawl that has been thrown over the child.*]

*Pauline* What d'you want o' me? Why d'you come chasin' me? I ain' no gypsy!

I don' go in people's houses stealin' their children! Eh? You're crazy. I wouldn't do no such thing. I ain't hardly got enough to eat for myself an' my own child. D'you s'pose I'm goin' to steal strange children an' feed 'em till they're grown when the one I got is trouble an' worry enough!

[*MRS KNOBBE stares about her inquiringly and as if seeking help. Rapidly she draws a little flask from her pocket and pours its contents upon a handkerchief. The latter she carries swiftly to her mouth and nose, inhaling the fragrance of the perfume to keep her from fainting.*]

*Hassenreuter* Well, why don't you speak, Mrs Knobbe? This girl asserts that she is the mother of the child—not you.

[*MRS KNOBBE lifts her umbrella in order to strike out with it. She is restrained by those present.*]

*Schierke*. That won't do! You can't practice no discipline like that here! You c'n do that when you're alone in your nursery downstairs—The main thing is who does this here kid belong to? An' so—now—Mrs Knobbe, you just take care an' think so's to tell nothin' but the truth here! Well! Is it yours or is it her'n?

*Mrs Knobbe* [*Bursts out*] I swear by the holy Mother of God, by Jesus Christ, Father, Son and Holy Ghost that I am the mother of this child.

*Pauline* An' I swears by the Holy Mother o' God...

*Hassenreuter*. You'd better not if you want to save your soul! We may have a case here in which the circumstances are complicated in the extreme! It is possible, therefore, that you were about to swear in perfectly good faith. But you will have to admit that, though each of you may well be the mother of twins—two mothers for one child is unthinkable!

*Walburga* [*Who, like MRS KNOBBE, has been staring steadily at the child*] Papa, papa, do look at the child a moment first!

*Mrs Kielbacke* [*Tearfully and horrified*] Yes, the poor little crittur's been a'dyn', I believe, ever since I was in the other room there!

*Schierke* What?

*Hassenreuter* How? [*Energetically he strides forward and now regards the child*]

carefully too! The child is dead There's no question about that! It seems that, invisible to us, one has been in our midst who has delivered judgment, truly according to the manner of Solomon, concerning the poor little passive object of all this strife

Pauline [Who has not understood] What's the matter?

Schierke Keep still!—You come along with me

[MRS KNOBBE seems to have lost the power of speech She puts her handkerchief into her mouth A moaning sob is heard deep in her chest SCHIERKE, MRS KIELBACKE with the dead child, followed by MRS KNOBBE and PAULINE PIPERCARCKA, leave the room A dull murmur is heard from the outer hall HASSENREUTER returns to the foreground after he has locked the door behind those who have left]

Hassenreuter Sic eunt fata hominum Invent something like that, if you can, my good Spitta

#### ACT FOUR

The dwelling of the foreman-mason JOHN as in the second act It is eight o'clock on a Sunday morning

JOHN is invisible behind the partition From his splashing and snorting it is clear that he is performing his morning ablutions

QUAQUARO has just entered His hand is still on the knob of the outer door.

Quaquaro Tell me, Paul, is your wife at home?

John [From behind the partition] Not yet, Emil My wife went with the boy out to my married sister's in Hangelsberg But she's goin' to come back this mornin' [Drying his hands and face, JOHN appears in the door of the partition wall] Good mornin' to you, Emil

Quaquaro Mornin', Paul

John Well, what's the news? I didn't come from the train till about half an hour ago

Quaquaro Yes, I saw you goin' into the house an' mountin' the stairs

John [In a jolly frame of mind] That's

right, Emil! You're a regular old watchdog, eh?

Quaquaro Tell, me, Paul How long has your wife'n the kid been out in Hangelsberg?

John Oh, that must be somethin' like a week now, Emil D'you want anythin' of her? I guess she paid her rent an' on time all right By the way, I might as well give you notice right now We got it all fixed We're goin' to move on the first of October. I got mother to the point at last that we c'n move outa this here shaky old barracks an' into a better neighbourhood

Quaquaro So you ain't goin' back to Hamburg no more?

John Naw It's a good sayin' Stay at home an' make an honest livin'! I'm not goin' outa town no more Not a bit of it! First of all, it's no sort o' life, goin' from one lodgin' to another An' then—a man don't get no younger neither! The girls, they ain't so hot after you no more . . . No, it's a good thing that all this wanderin' about is goin' to end

Quaquaro Your wife—she's a fine schemer

John [Merrily] Well, this is a brand new household what's jus' had a child born into it I said to the boss I'm a newly married man! Then he axed me if my first wife was dead On the contrary an' not a bit of it, I says She's alive an' kickin', so that she's jus' given birth to a kickin' young citizen o' Berlin, that's what! When I was travelin' along from Hamburg this mornin' by all the old stations—Hamburg, Stendal, Ultzen—an' got outa the fourth-class coach at the Lehrter station with all my duds, the devil take me if I didn't thank God with a sigh I guess he didn't hear on account o' the noise o' the trains

Quaquaro Did you hear, Paul, that Mrs. Knobbe's youngest over the way has been taken off again?

John No What chance did I have to hear that? But if it's dead, it's a good thing, Emil When I saw the poor crittur a week ago when it had convulsions an' Selma brought it in an' me an' mother gave it a spoonful o' sugar an' water—well, it was pretty near ready for heaven then.

Quaquaro An' you mean to tell me that you didn't hear nothin' o' the circum-



stances, about the how an' the why o' that child's death?

*John* Naw! [*He fetches a long tobacco pipe from behind the sofa*] Wait a minute! I'll light a pipe first! I didn't have no chanct to hear nothin'

*Quaquaro* Well, I'm surprised that your wife didn't write you nothin' at all

*John* Aw, since we has a child o' our own, mother's taken no interest in them Knobbe brats no more

*Quaquaro* [*Observing JOHN with lurking curiosity*] Your wife was reel crazy to have a son, wasn't she?

*John* Well, that's natural D'you think I wasn't? What's a man to work for? What do I slave away for? It's different thing savin' a good lump o' money for your own son from doin' it for your sister's children

*Quaquaro* So you don't know that a strange girl came here an' swore that the Knobbe woman's child wasn't hers but belonged to the girl?

*John* Is that so? Well, Mrs Knobbe an' child stealin'—them two things don't go together Now if it'd been mother, that would ha' been more likely But not that Knobbe woman! But tell me, Emil, what's all this here business about?

*Quaquaro* Well, one person says one thing an' another says another. The Knobbe woman says that certain people has started a plot with detectives an' such like to get hold o' the brat An' there ain't no doubt o' this It's proved that the child was hers C'n you maybe give me a tip as to where your brother-in-law's been keepin' hisself the past few days?

*John* You mean the butcher in Hangelsberg?

*Quaquaro* Naw, I don' mean the husband o' your sister, but the feller what's brother o' your wife

*John* It's Bruno you mean?

*Quaquaro* Sure, that's the feller

*John* How do I know? I'd sooner be watchin' if the dogs still plays on the curb I don't want to have no dealin's with Bruno

*Quaquaro* Listen to me, Paul But don't get mad They knows at the police station that Bruno was seen in company o' the Polish girl what wanted to claim this here child, first right outside o' the door here an' then at a certain place on Shore street

where the tanners sometimes looses their soakin' hides An' now the girl's jus' disappeared I don' know nothin' o' the particulars, excep' that the police is huntin' for the girl

*John* [*Resolutely putting aside the long pipe which he had lit*] I don' know, but I can't take no enjoyment in it this mornin'. I don' know what's gotten into me I was as jolly as can be An' now all of a sudden I feel so dam' mean I'd like to go straight back to Hamburg an' hear an' see nothin' more!—Why d'you come aroun' with stories like that?

*Quaquaro*. I jus' thought I'd tell you what happened while you an' your wife was away right here in your own house?

*John* In my own house?

*Quaquaro* That's it! Yessir! They says that Selma pushed the perambulator with her little brother in here where the strange girl an' her friend came an' took him an' carried him off. But upstairs, in the actor's place, they caught her

*John* What's that?

*Quaquaro* So up there the strange girl an' the Knobbe woman pretty near tore each other's hair out over the child's body

*John* What I'd like to know is how all that concerns me? Ain't there trouble here over some girl most o' the time? Let 'em go on! I don' care! That is to say, Emil, if there ain't more to it than you're tellin' me

*Quaquaro* That's why I come to you! There is more The girl said in front o' witnesses more'n onct that that little crittur o' Knobbe's was her own an' that she had expressly given it in board to your wife

*John* [*First taken aback, then relieved Laughing*] She ain't quite right in her upper story That's all

[*ERICH SPITTA enters*]

*Spitta* Good morning, Mr John

*John* Good mornin', Mr Spitta [*To QUAQUARO, who is still loitering in the door*] It's all right, Emil I'll take notice o' what you says an' act accordin'

[*QUAQUARO exits*]

*John* Now jus' look at a feller like that, Mr Spitta He's more'n half a gaol bird an' yet he knows how to make hisself a favourite with the district commissioner at

headquarters! An' then he goes aroun' pokin' his nose into honest folks' affairs

*Sputta* Has Miss Walburga Hassenreuter been asking after me, Mr John?

*John* Not up to this time, not that I knows of! [*He opens the door to the hall*] Selma! Excuse me a minute, will you? Selma! I gotta know what that there girl c'n tell me

[*SELMA KNOBBE enters*]

*Selma* [*Still at the door*] What d'you want?

*John* You shut the door a minute an' come in! An' now tell me, girl, what's all this that happened in this room about your little dead brother and the strange girl?

*Selma* [*Who has, obviously, a bad conscience, gradually comes forward watchfully. She now answers glibly and volubly*] I pushed the perambulator over into the room here. Your wife wasn't in an' so I thinks that maybe here there'd be more quiet, 'cause my little brother, you know, he was sick anyhow an' cryin' all the time. An' then, all of a sudden, a gentleman an' a lady an' another woman all comes in here, an' they picked the little feller right outa the carridge an' put clean clothes on him an' carried him off.

*John* An' then the lady said as how it was her child an' how she'd given it in board with mother, with my old woman?

*Selma* [*Laes*] Naw, not a bit. I'd know about that if it was so.

*John* [*Bangs his fist on the table*] Well, damn it all, it'd be a idjut's trick to have said that.

*Sputta* Permit me, but she did say that I take it you're talking of the incident with the two women that took place upstairs at manager Hassenreuter's?

*John* Did you see that? Was you there when the Knobbe woman an' the other one was disputin' about the little crittur?

*Sputta* Yes, certainly. I was present throughout.

*Selma* I tell you all I knows. An' I couldn't say no more if officer Schuerke or the tall police lieutenant hisself was to examine me for hours an' hours. I don't know nothin'. An' what I don't know I can't tell.

*John* The lieutenant examined you?

*Selma* They wanted to take mama to the lock-up because people went an' lied

They said that our little baby was starved to death.

*John* Aha! 's that so? Well, Selma, s'pose you go over there an' cook a little coffee.

[*SELMA goes over to the stove where she prepares coffee for JOHN. JOHN himself goes up to his working table, takes up the compass. Then he draws lines, using a piece of rail as a ruler*]

*Sputta* [*Conquering his diffidence and shame*] I really hoped to meet your wife here, Mr John. Someone told me that your wife has been in the habit of lending out small sums to students against security. And I am somewhat embarrassed.

*John* Maybe that's so. But tha's mother's business, Mr Sputta.

*Sputta* To be quite frank with you, if I don't get hold of some money by to-night, the few books and other possessions I have will be attached for rent by my landlady and I'll be put into the street.

*John* I thought your father was a preacher.

*Sputta* So he is. But for that very reason and because I don't want to become a preacher, too, he and I had a terrible quarrel last night. I won't ever accept a farthing from him any more.

*John* [*Busy over his drawing*] Then it'll serve him right if you starve or break your neck.

*Sputta* Men like myself don't starve, Mr. John. But if, by any chance, I were to go to the dogs—I shouldn't greatly care.

*John* No one wouldn't believe how many half-starved nincompoops there is among you stoddents. But none o' you wants to put your hand to some reel work—[*The distant sound of thunder is heard. JOHN looks out through the window*].—Sultry day. It's thunderin' now.

*Sputta* You can't say that of me, Mr John, that I haven't been willing to do real work. I've given lessons, I've addressed envelopes for business houses! I've been through everything and in all these attempts I've not only toiled away the days but also the nights. And at the same time I've ground away at my studies like anything!

*John* Man alive, go to Hamburg an' let 'em give you a job as a bricklayer. When

I was your age I was makin' as much as twelve crowns a day in Hamburg

*Spitta* That may be But I'm a brain worker

*John* I know that kind

*Spitta* Is that so? I don't think you do know that kind, Mr John I beg you not to forget that your Socialist leaders—your Bebels and your Liebknechts—are brain workers too.

*John* All right Come on, then! Let's have some breakfast Things look mighty different after a man's had a good bite o' breakfast I s'pose you ain't had any yet, Mr Spitta?

*Spitta*. No, frankly, not to-day.

*John* Well, then the first thing is to get somethin' warm down your throat

*Spitta* There's time enough for that

*John* I don' know You're lookin' pretty well done up An' I passed the night on the train too [*To SELMA, who has brought in a little linen bag filled with rolls*] Hurry an' bring another cup over here

[*He has seated himself at his ease on the sofa, dips a roll into the coffee and begins to eat and drink*]

*Spitta* [*Who has not sat down yet*] It's really pleasanter to pass a summer night in the open if one can't sleep anyhow And I didn't sleep for one minute

*John* I'd like to see the feller what c'n sleep when he's outa cash When a man's down in the world he has most company outa doors too [*He suddenly stops chewing*]—Come here, Selma, an' tell me exactly just how it was with that there girl an' the child that she took outa our room here.

*Selma* I don' know what to do Everybody axes me that Mama keeps axin' me about it all day long, if I seen Bruno Mechelke, if I know who it was that stole the costumes from the actor's loft up there! If it goes on that way . . .

*John* [*Energetically*] Girl, why didn't you cry out when the gentleman and the young lady took your little brother outa his carridge?

*Selma* I didn't think nothin' 'd happen to him excep' that he'd get some clean clothes

*John*. [*Grasps SELMA by the wrist*] Well,

you come along with me now. We'll go over an' see your mother

[*JOHN and SELMA leave the room As soon as they are gone SPITTA begins to eat ravenously Soon thereafter WALBURGA appears She is in great haste and strongly excited*]

*Walburga* Are you alone?

*Spitta*. For the moment, yes. Good morning, Walburga

*Walburga* Am I too late? It was only by the greatest cunning, by the greatest determination, by the most ruthless disregard of everything that I succeeded in getting away from home My younger sister tried to bar the door Even the servant girl! But I told mama that if they wouldn't let me out through the door, they might just as well bar the window, else I'd reach the street through it, although it's three stories high I flew I'm more dead than alive But I am prepared for anything How was it with your father, Erich?

*Spitta* We have parted He thought that I was going out to eat husks with the swine as the Prodigal Son did, and told me not to take it into my mind ever again to cross the threshold of my father's house in my future capacity as acrobat or bareback rider, as he was pleased to express it His door was not open to such scum! Well, I'll fight it down! Only I'm sorry for my poor, dear mother—You can't imagine with what abysmal hatred a man of his kind considers the theatre and everything connected with it The heaviest curse is not strong enough to express his feelings An actor is, to his mind, *a priori*, the worst, most contemptible scamp imaginable

*Walburga* I've found out, too, how papa discovered our secret

*Spitta* My father gave him your picture

*Walburga* O Erich, if you knew with what awful, with what horrible names papa overwhelmed me in his rage And I had to be silent through it all I might have said something that would have silenced all his lofty moral discourses and made him quite helpless before me I was almost on the point of saying it, too But I felt so ashamed for him! My tongue refused to form the words! I couldn't say it, Erich! Finally mama had to intervene He struck me! For eight or nine hours he

locked me in a dark alcove—to break my stubbornness, as he put it, Erich. Well, he won't succeed! He won't break it!

*Spitta* [*Taking WALBURGA into his arms*] You dear, brave girl! I am beginning to see now what I possess in having your love, what a treasure you are! [*Passionately*] And how beautiful you look, Walburga!

*Walburga* Don't! Don't—I trust you, Erich, that's all.

*Spitta* And you shall not be disappointed, dearest. You see, a man like me in whom everything is still in a ferment, who feels that he was born to achieve something great and significant but something which, for the present, he can make sufficiently clear neither to himself nor to the world—such a man has, at twenty, every man's hand against him and is a burden and a laughing-stock to all the world. But believe me it will not always be so! The germs of the future lie in us! The soil is being loosened even now by the budding shoots! Unseen to-day, we are the harvest of the future! We are the future! And the time will come when all this great and beautiful world will be ours!

*Walburga* Ah, go on, Erich! What you say heals my heart.

*Spitta* Walburga, I did more, last night! I flung straight out into my father's face, just as I felt it, my accusation of the crime committed against my sister. And that made the break definite and unbridgeable. He said stubbornly. He had no knowledge of such a daughter as I was describing. Such a daughter had no existence in his soul, and it seemed to him that his son would also soon cease to exist there. O these Christians! O these servants of the good shepherd who took the lost lamb with double tenderness into his arms! O thou good Shepherd, how have your words been perverted! How have your eternal truths been falsified into their exact contrary! But to-day when I sat amidst the flash of lightning and the roll of thunder in the *Tiergarten* and certain Berlin hyenas were prowling about me, I felt the crushed and restless soul of my sister close beside me. How many nights, in her poor life, may she not have sat shelterless on such benches perhaps on this very bench in the *Tiergarten*, in order to consider in her

loneliness, her degradation, her outcast estate, how, two thousand years after the birth of Christ, this most Christian world is drenched with Christianity and with the love of its fellowmen! But whatever she thought, this is what I think. The poor harlot, the wretched sinner who is yet above the righteous, who is weighed down by the sins of the world, the poor outcast and her terrible accusation shall never die in my soul! And into this flame of our souls we must cast all the wretchedness, all the lamentations of the oppressed and the disinherited! Thus shall my sister stay truly alive, Walburga, and effect noble ends before the face of God through the ethical impulse that lends wings to my soul, and that will be more powerful than all the evil, heartless parson's morality in the world.

*Walburga* You were in the *Tiergarten* all night, Erich? Is that the reason why your hands are so icy cold, and why you look so utterly worn out? Erich, you must take my purse! No, please, you must! Oh, I assure you what is mine is yours! If you don't feel that, you don't love me. Erich, you're suffering! If you don't take my few pennies, I'll refuse all nourishment at home! By heaven, I'll do it, I'll do it, unless you're sensible about that!

*Spitta* [*Chokes down his rising tears and sits down*] I'm nervous, I'm overwrought.

*Walburga* [*Puts her purse into his pocket*] And you see, Erich, this is the real reason why I asked you to meet me here. To add to all my misfortunes I received yesterday this summons from the court.

*Spitta* [*Regards a document which she hands to him*] Look here? What's behind this, Walburga?

*Walburga*. I'm quite sure that it must have some connection with the stolen goods upstairs in the loft. But it does disquiet me terribly. If papa were to discover this . . . oh, what would I do then?

[*MRS JOHN enters, carrying the child in her arms. She is dressed for the street, and looks dusty and harassed*]

*Mrs John* [*Frightened, suspicious*] Well, what d'you want here? Is Paul home yet? I jus' went down in the street a little

with the baby [*She carries the child behind the partition*]

Walburga Erich, do mention the summons to Mrs John!

Mrs John Why, Paul's at home There's his things!

Spitta Miss Hassenreuter wanted very much to talk to you She received a summons to appear in court It's probably about those things that were stolen from the loft You know.

Mrs John [*Emerging from behind the partition*] What's that? You reelly got a summons, Miss Walburga? Well, then you better look out! I ain't jokin' An' maybe you're thinkin' o' the black man!

Spitta What you're saying there is quite incomprehensible, Mrs John

Mrs John [*Taking up her domestic tasks*] Did you hear that 'way out in the Lauben settlement, beyond the Halle Gate, the lightenin' struck a man an' a woman an' a little girl o' seven this mornin' It was right under a tall poplar tree

Spitta No, Mrs John, we didn't hear that

Mrs. John. The rain's splashin' down again

[*One hears a shower of rain beginning to fall*]

Walburga [*Nervously*] Come, Erich, let's get out into the open, anyhow

Mrs John [*Speaking louder and louder in her incoherent terror*] An' I tell you another thing I was talking to the woman what was struck by lightenin' jus' a short time before An' she says—now listen to me, Mr Spitta—if you takes a dead child what's lyin' in its carridge an' pushes it out into the sun . . . but it's gotta be summer an' midday . . . it'll draw breath, it'll cry, it'll come back to life!—You don't believe that, eh? But I seen that with my own eyes! [*She circles about the room in a strange fashion, apparently becoming quite oblivious of the presence of the two young people*]

Walburga Look here, Mrs John is positively uncanny! Let's go!

Mrs John [*Speaking still louder*] You don't believe that, that it'll come to life again, eh? I tell you, its mother c'n come an' take it But it's gotta be nursed right off

Spitta Good-bye, Mrs John

Mrs John [*In strange excitement accompanies the two young people to the door Speaking still more loudly*] You don' believe that! But it's the solemn truth, Mr Spitta!

[*SPITTA and WALBURGA leave the room*]

Mrs John [*Still holding the door in her hand calls out after them*] Anybody that don' believe that don' know nothin' o' the whole secret that I discovered

[*The foreman-mason JOHN appears in the door and enters at once*]

John. Why, there you are, mother! I'm glad to see you What's that there secret you're talkin' about?

Mrs John [*As though awakening, grasps her head*] Me?—Did I say somethin' about a secret?

John That you did unless I'm hard o' hearin' An' it's reelly you unless it's a ghost

Mrs John [*Surprised and frightened*] Why d'you think I might be a ghost?

John [*Pats his wife good-naturedly on the back*] Come now, Jette, don't bite me I'm reel glad, that I am, that you're here again with the little kid! [*He goes behind the partition*] But it's lookin' a little measly.

Mrs John The milk didn't agree with him An' that's because out there in the country the cows is already gettin' green fodder I got milk here from the dairy company that comes from dry fed cows

John [*Reappears in the main room*] That's what I'm sayin' Why did you have to go an' take the child on the train an' outa town The city is healthier That's my notion

Mrs John I'm goin' to stay at home now, Paul

John In Hamburg everythin' is settled, too To-day at noon I'm goin' to meet Karl an' then he'll tell me when I c'n start workin' for the new boss!—Look here I brought somethin' with me, too [*He takes a small child's rattle from his breeches pocket and shakes it*]

Mrs John What's that?

John That's somethin' to bring a bit o' life into the place, 'cause it's pretty quiet inside in Berlin here! Listen how the kid's crowin' [*The child is heard making happy little noises*] I tell you, mother, when a

little kid goes on that way—there ain't nothin' I'd take for it!

*Mrs John* Have you seen anybody yet?

*John* No!—Leastways only Quaquaro early this mornin'.

*Mrs John.* [*In timid suspense*] Well ?

*John* Oh, never mind! Nothin'! There was nothin' to it.

*Mrs John* [*As before*] What did he say?

*John* What d'you think he said? But if you're bound to know—'tain't no use talkin' o' such things Sunday mornin'—he aied me after Bruno again.

*Mrs John* [*Pale and speaking hastily*] What do they say Bruno has done again?

*John* Nothin' Here, come'n drink a little coffee, Jette, an' don' get excited! It ain't your fault that you got a brother like that. We don't has to concern ourselves about other people.

*Mrs John* I'd like to know what an old fool like that what spies aroun' all day long has always gotta be talkin' about Bruno.

*John* Jette, don' bother me about Bruno—You see . . . aw, what's the use might as well keep still! But if I was goin' to tell you the truth, I'd say that it wouldn't surprise me if some day Bruno'd come to a pretty bad end right out in the yard o' the gaol, too—a quick end [*Mrs John sits down heavily beside the table. She grows grey in the face and breathes with difficulty*] Maybe not! Maybe not! Don't take it to heart so right off!—How's the sister?

*Mrs John* I don' know.

*John* Why, I thought you was out there visitin' her?

*Mrs John* [*Looks at him absently*] Where was I?

*John* Well, you see, Jette, that's the way it is with you women! You're jus' shakin', but oh no—you don' want to go to no doctor! An' it'll end maybe by your havin' to take to your bed. That's what comes o' neglectin' nature.

*Mrs John* [*Throwing her arms about JOHN'S neck*] Paul, you're goin' to leave me! For God's sake, tell me right out that it's so! Don' fool me aroun' an' cheat me! Tell me right out!

*John* What's the matter with you to-day, Henrietta?

*Mrs John* [*Pulling herself together*] Don' attend to my fool talk. I ain't had no rest all night—that's it. An' then I got up reel early, an' anyhow, it ain't nothin' but that I'm a bit weak yet.

*John* Then you better lie down flat on your back an' rest a little [*Mrs John throws herself on the sofa and stares at the ceiling*] Maybe you'd better comb yourself a bit afterwards, Jette!—It musta been mighty dusty on the train for you to be jus' covered all over with sand the way you are! [*Mrs John does not answer but continues staring at the ceiling*] I must go an' bring that there little feller into the light a bit [*He goes behind the partition*].

*Mrs John* How long has we been married, Paul?

*John* [*Plays with the rattle behind the partition. Then answers*] That was in eighteen hundred and seventy-two, jus' as I came back from the war.

*Mrs John* Then you came to father, didn't you? An' you assoomed a grand position an' you had the Iron Cross on the left side o' your chest.

*John* [*Appears, swinging the rattle and carrying the child on its pillow. He speaks merrily*] That's so, mother. An' I got it yet. If you want to see it, I'll pin it on.

*Mrs John* [*Still stretched out on the sofa*] An' then you came to me an' you said that I wasn't to be so busy all the time . . . goin' up an' down, runnin' upstairs an' downstairs . . . that I was to be a bit more easygoin'.

*John* An' I'm still sayin' that same thing to-day.

*Mrs John* An' then you tickled me with your moustache an' kissed me right behind my left ear. An' then.

*John* Then it didn't take long for us to agree, eh?

*Mrs John* Yes, an' I laughed an', bit by bit, I looked at myself in every one o' your brass buttons. I was lookin' different then! An' then you said.

*John* Well, mother, you're a great one for rememberin' things, I must say!

*Mrs John* An' then you said. When we has a boy, an' that'll be soon, he c'n follow the flag into the field too "with God for King an' country."

*John* [*Sings to the child, playing with the rattle*]

"To heaven he turns his glances bold  
Whence gaze the hero sires of old  
The Rhine, the Rhine, the German  
Rhine!"

Well, an' now that I has a little feller like  
that I ain't half so keen on sendin' him to  
the war to be food for powder [*He re-  
tires with the child behind the partition*]

*Mrs John* [*Still staring at the ceiling*]  
Paul, Paul! Seems as if all that was a  
hundred years ago!

*John*. [*Reappears from behind the par-  
tition without the child*] Not as long ago  
as all that

*Mrs John* Look here, what d'you think?  
How would it be if you was to take me an'  
the child an' go to America?

*John* Now listen here, Jette! What's  
gotten into you, anyhow? What is it?  
Looks as if there was nothin' but ghosts  
aroun' me here! You know I has a good  
easy temper! When the workmen heave  
bricks at each other, I don't even get ex-  
cited An' what do they say? Paul has  
a comfortable nature But now what's  
this here? The sun's shinin', it's bright  
daylight! I can't see nothin', that's a fac'  
But somethin's titterin' an' whisperin' an'  
creepin' aroun' in here Only when I  
stretches out my hand I can't lay hold on  
nothin'! Now I wants to know what there  
is to this here story about the strange girl  
what came to the room Is it true?

*Mrs John* You heard, Paul, that the  
young lady didn't come back no more An'  
that shows you, don't it . . .

*John* I hear what you're sayin' But  
your lips is fair blue an' your eyes look as  
if somebody was tormentin' you

*Mrs John* [*Suddenly changing her atti-  
tude*] Yes Why do you leave me alone  
year in an' year out, Paul? I sits here like  
in a cave an' I ain't got a soul to who I  
c'n say what I'm thinkin' Many a time  
I've sat here an' axed myself why I works  
an' works, why I skimps an' saves to get  
together a few crowns, an' find good invest-  
ments for your earnin's an' try to add to  
'em Why? Was all that to go to stran-  
gers? Paul, it's you who's been the run  
o' me [*She lays her head on the table  
and bursts out in sobs*]

[*Softly and with feline stealth*

BRUNO MECHELKE enters the  
room at this moment He has

on his Sunday duds, a sprig of  
hlaac in his hat and a great bunch  
of it in his hand JOHN drums  
with his fingers on the window  
and does not observe him]

*Mrs John* [*Has gradually realised BRU-  
no's presence as though he were a ghost*]  
Bruno, is that you?

*Bruno* [*Who has recognised JOHN in a  
flash, softly*] Sure, it's me, Jette

*Mrs John* Where d'you come from?  
What d'you want?

*Bruno* I been dancin' all night, Jette!  
You c'n see, can't you, that I'm dam'  
jolly?

*John* [*Has been staring steadily at  
BRUNO A dangerous pallor has overspread  
his face He now goes slowly to a small  
cupboard, takes out an old army revolver  
and loads it MRS JOHN does not observe  
this*] You! Listen! I'll tell you some-  
thin'—somethin' you forgot, maybe There  
ain't no reason on God's earth why I  
shouldn't pull this here trigger! You scoun-  
drell! You ain't fit to be among human  
bein's! I told you . . . las' fall it was  
. . . that I'd shoot you down if I ever  
laid eyes on you in my home again! Now  
go . . . or I'll . . . shoot Y'understan'?

*Bruno* Aw, I ain't scared o' your jelly  
squirter.

*Mrs John* [*Observes that JOHN,  
losing control of himself, is slowly ap-  
proaching BRUNO with the weapon and rais-  
ing it*] Then kill me too, Paul 'Cause  
he's my brother.

*John* [*Looks at her long, seems to  
awaken and change his mind*] All right  
[*He replaces the revolver carefully in the  
cupboard*] You're right, anyhow, Jette!  
It's hell, Jette, that your name's got to  
be on the tongue of a crittur like that.  
All right The powder'd be too good too  
This here little pistol's tasted the blood o'  
two French cavalry men! Heroes they  
was! An' I don't want it to drink no dirt

*Bruno* I ain' doubtin' that there's dirt  
in your head! An' if it hadn't been that  
you board with my sister here I'd ha' let  
the light into you long ago, you dirt eater,  
so you'd ha' bled for weeks

*John* [*With tense restraint*] Tell me  
again, Jette, that it's your brother

*Mrs John* Go, Paul, will you? I'll get  
him away all right! You know's well as I



that I can't help it now that Bruno's my own brother

John All right Then I'm one too many here You c'n bill an' coo [*He is dressed for the street as it is and hence proceeds to go Close by BRUNO he stands still*] You scamp! You worried your father into his grave Your sister might better ha' let you starve behind some fence rather'n raise you an' litter the earth with another criminal like you I'll be back in half an hour! But I won't be alone I'll have the sergeant with me! [*He leaves by the outer door, putting on his slouch hat*]

[*So soon as JOHN has disappeared BRUNO turns and spits out after him toward the door*]

Bruno If I ever gets hold o' you!

Mrs John Why d'you come, Bruno? Tell me, what's the matter?

Bruno Tin's what you gotta give me Or I'll go to hell

Mrs John [*Locks and latches the outer door*] Wait till I close the door! Now, what's the matter? Where d'you come from? Where has you been?

Bruno Oh, I danced about half the night an' then, about sunrise, I went out into the country for a bit

Mrs John Did Quaquaro see you comin' in, Bruno? Then you better look out that you ain't walked into no trap

Bruno No danger I crossed the yard an' then went through the cellar o' my friend what deals in junk an' after that up through the loft

Mrs John Well, an' what happened?

Bruno Don' fool aroun', Jette I gotta have railroad fare I gotta take to my heels or I'll go straight to hell

Mrs John An' what did you do with that there girl?

Bruno Oh, I found a way, Jette!

Mrs John What's the meanin' o' that?

Bruno Oh, I managed to make her a little more accommodatin' all right!

Mrs John An' is it a sure thing that she won't come back now?

Bruno Sure I don' believe that she'll come again! But that wasn't no easy piece of work, Jette But I tell you . . . gimme somethin' to drink—quick! I tell you, you made me thirsty with your damned

business—thirsty, an' hot as hell. [*He drains a jug full of water*]

Mrs John People saw you outside the door with the girl

Bruno I had to make a engagement with Arthur She didn't want to have nothin' to do with me But Arthur, he came dancin' along in his fine clothes an' he managed to drag her along to a bar She swallowed the bait right down when he told her as how her intended was waitin' for her there [*He trills out, capering about convulsively*]

"All we does in life's to go

Up an' down an' to an' fro

From a tap-room to a show!"

Mrs John Well, an' then?

Bruno Then she wanted to get away 'cause Arthur said that her intended had gone off! Then I wanted to go along with her a little bit an' Arthur an' Adolph, they came along Next we dropped in the ladies' entrance at Kalmich's an' what with tastin' a lot o' toddy an' other liquors she got good an' tipsy An' then she staid all night with a woman what's Arthur's sweetheart All next day there was always two or three of us boys after her, didn't let her go, an' played all kinds o' tricks, an' things got jollier an' jollier

[*The church bells of the Sunday morning services begin to ring*]

Bruno [*Goes on*] But the money's gone I needs crowns an' pennies, Jette

Mrs John [*Rummaging for money*] How much has you got to have?

Bruno [*Listening to the bells*] What?

Mrs John Money!

Bruno The old bag o' bones in the junk shop downstairs was thinkin' as how I'd better get across the Russian frontier! Listen, Jette, how the bells is ringin'

Mrs John Why do you has to get acrost the frontier?

Bruno Take a wet towel, Jette, an' put a little vinegar on it I been bothered with this here dam' nosebleed all night

[*He presses his handkerchief to his nose*]

Mrs John [*Breathing convulsively, brings a towel*] Who was it scratched your wrist into shreds that way?

Bruno [*Listening to the bells*] Half past three o'clock this mornin' she could ha' heard them bells yet

Mrs John O Jesus, my Saviour! That ain't true! That can't noways be possible!



I didn't tell you nothin' like that, Bruno! Bruno, I has to sit down Oh! [*She sits down*] That's what our father foretold to me on his dyin' bed

Bruno It ain't so easy jokin' with me. If you go to see Minna, jus' tell her that I got the trick o' that kind o' thing an' that them goin's on with Karl an' with Fritz has to stop

Mrs John But, Bruno, if they was to catch you!

Bruno Well, then I has to swing, an' out at the Charity hospital they got another stiff to dissect

Mrs John [*Giving him money*] Oh, that ain't true What did you do, Bruno?

Bruno You're a crazy old crittur, Jette—[*He puts his hand on her not without a tremor of emotion*] You always says as how I ain't good for nothin' But when things can't go on no more, then you needs me, Jette

Mrs John Well, but how? Did you threaten the girl that she wasn't to let herself be seen no more? That's what you ought to ha' done, Bruno! An' did you?

Bruno I danced with her half the night An' then we went out on the street Well, a gentleman came along, y'understand? Well, when I told him that I had some little business o' my own to transact with the lady an' pulled my brass-knuckles outa my breeches, o' course he took to his heels—Then I says to her, says I Don't you be scared If you're peaceable an' don' make no outcry an' don' come no more to my sister axin' after the child—well, we c'n make a reel friendly bargain So she toddled along with me a ways

Mrs John Well, an' then?

Bruno Well, she didn't want to! An' all of a sudden she went for my throat that I thought it'd be the end o' me then an' there! Like a dawg she went for me hot an' heavy! An' then . . . then I got a little bit excited too—an' then, well . . . that's how it come . . .

Mrs John [*Sunk in horror*] What time d'you say it was?

Bruno It must ha' been somewhere between three an' four The moon had a big ring aroun' it Out on the square there was a dam' cur behind the planks what got up an' howled Then it began to drip an' soon a thunderstorm came up

Mrs John [*Changed and with sudden self-mastery*] It's all right. Go on She don' deserve no better

Bruno Good-bye I s'pose we ain't goin' to see each other for years an' years

Mrs John Where you goin' to?

Bruno First of all I gotta lie flat on my back for a couple o' hours I'm goin' to Fritz's He's got a room for rent in the old police station right acrost from the Fisher's Bridge I'm safe there all right If there's anythin' of a outcry you c'n lemme know

Mrs John Don' you want to take a peek at the child onct more?

Bruno [*Trembling*] Naw!

Mrs John Why not?

Bruno No, Jette, not in this here life! Good-bye, Jette Hol' on a minute Here I got a horseshoe [*He puts the horseshoe on the table*] I found it That'll bring you good luck I don' need it

[*Stealthily as he has come, BRUNO MECHELKE also disappears MRS JOHN, her eyes wide with horror, stares at the spot where he stood Then she totters backward a few paces, presses her hands, clenched convulsively as if in prayer, against her mouth, and collapses, still trying in vain to stammer out a prayerful appeal to heaven*]

Mrs John I ain't no murderer! I ain't no murderer! I didn't want that to happen!

## ACT FIVE

JOHN'S room MRS JOHN is asleep on the sofa WALBURGA and SPITTA enter from the outer hall The loud playing of a military band is heard from the street.

Spitta No one is here

Walburga Oh, yes, there is, Erich. Mrs John! She's asleep here

Spitta [*Approaching the sofa together with WALBURGA*] Is she asleep? So she is! I don't understand how anyone can sleep amidst this noise

[*The music of the band trails off into silence*]

Walburga Oh, Erich, sh! I have a perfect horror of the woman Can you understand anyhow why policemen are guarding

the entrance downstairs and why they won't let us go out into the street? I'm so awfully afraid that, maybe, they'll arrest us and take us along to the station.

*Spitta* Oh, but there's not the slightest danger Walburga! You're seeing ghosts by broad daylight.

*Walburga* When the plain clothes man came up to you and looked at us and you asked him who he was and he showed his badge under his coat, I assure you, at that moment, the stairs and the hall suddenly began to go around with me.

*Spitta* They're looking for a criminal, Walburga. It is a so-called raid that is going on here, a kind of man hunt such as the criminal police is at times obliged to undertake.

*Walburga* And you can believe me, too, Erich, that I heard papa's voice. He was talking quite loudly to some one.

*Spitta* You are nervous. You may have been mistaken.

*Walburga* [*Frightened at Mrs JOHN, who is speaking in her sleep*] Listen to her do!

*Spitta* Great drops of sweat are standing on her forehead. Come here! Just look at the rusty old horseshoe that she is clapping with both hands.

*Walburga* [*Listens and starts with fright again*] Papa!

*Spitta* I don't understand you. Let him come, Walburga. The essential thing is that one knows what one wants and that one has a clean conscience. I am ready. I long for the explanation to come about.

[*A loud knocking is heard at the door*]

*Spitta* [*Firmly*] Come in!

[*Mrs Hassenreuter enters, more out of breath than usual. An expression of relief comes over her face as she catches sight of her daughter*]

*Mrs Hassenreuter* Thank God! There you are, children! [*Trembling, WALBURGA throws herself into her mother's arms*] Girlie, but what a fright you've given your old mother.

[*A pause in which only the breathing of Mrs Hassenreuter is heard*]

*Walburga* Forgive me, mama. I couldn't act differently.

*Mrs Hassenreuter* Oh, no! One doesn't

write letters containing such thoughts to one's own mother. And especially not to a mother like me. If your soul is in pain you know very well that you can always count on me for help and counsel. I'm not a monster, and I was young myself once. But to threaten to drown yourself . . . and things like that . . . no, that's all wrong. You shouldn't have done that. Surely you agree with me, Mr Spitta. And now this very minute . . . heavens, how you both look! . . . this very minute you must both come home with me!—What's the matter with Mrs John?

*Walburga* Oh yes, help us! Don't forsake us! Take us with you, mama! Oh, I'm so glad that you're here! I was just paralysed with fright!

*Mrs Hassenreuter* Very well, then. Come along. That would be the last straw if one had to be prepared for such desperate follies from you, Mr Spitta, or from this child! At your age one should have courage. If everything doesn't go quite smoothly you have no right to think of expedients by which one has nothing to gain and everything to lose. We live but once, after all.

*Spitta* Oh, I have courage! And I'm not thinking of putting an end to myself as one who is weary and defeated . . . unless Walburga is refused to me. In that case, to be sure, my determination is firm. It doesn't in the least undermine my belief in myself or in my future that I am poor for the present and have to take my dinner occasionally in the people's kitchen. And I am sure Walburga is equally convinced that a day must come that will indemnify us for all the dark and difficult hours of the present.

*Mrs Hassenreuter* Life is long, and you're almost children to-day. It's not so very bad for a student to have to take an occasional meal in the people's kitchen. It would be much worse, however, for Walburga as a married woman. And I hope for the sake of you both that you'll wait till something in the nature of a hearthstone of your own with the necessary wood and coal can be founded. In the meantime I've succeeded in persuading papa to a kind of truce. It wasn't easy and it might have been impossible had not this morning's mail brought the news of

his definitive appointment as manager of the theatre at Strassburg.

*Walburga* [Joyously] Oh, mama, mama! That is a ray of sunshine, isn't it?

*Mrs John* [Sits up with a start] Bruno!

*Mrs Hassenreuter* [Apologising] Oh, we've wakened you, Mrs John.

*Mrs John* Is Bruno gone?

*Mrs Hassenreuter* Who? Who's Bruno?

*Mrs John* Why, Bruno! Don't you know Bruno?

*Mrs Hassenreuter*. Ah, yes, yes! That's the name of your brother

*Mrs John* Was I asleep?

*Spitta* Fast asleep But you cried out aloud in your sleep just now

*Mrs John* Did you see, Mr Spitta, how them boys out in the yard threw stones at my little Adelbert's wee grave? But I got after 'em, eh? An' they wasn't no bad slaps neither what I dealt out

*Mrs. Hassenreuter* It seems that you've been dreaming of your first little boy who died, Mrs John

*Mrs John* No, no; all that's fac'l I ain't been dreamin'. An' then I took little Adelbert an' I went with him to the registrar's office

*Mrs Hassenreuter* But if your little boy's no longer alive . . . how could you . . .

*Mrs John* Aw, when a little child is onct born, it don't matter if it's dead. it's still right inside o' its mother Did you hear that dawg howlin' behind the board fence? An' the moon had a big ring aroun' it! Bruno, you ain't doin' right!

*Mrs Hassenreuter* [Shaking Mrs JOHN] Wake up, my good woman! Wake up, Mrs John! You are ill! Your husband ought to take you to see a physician

*Mrs John* Bruno, you ain' doin' right! [The bells are ringing again] Ain't them the bells?

*Mrs Hassenreuter* The service is over, Mrs John

*Mrs John* [Wholly awake now, stares about her] Why does I wake up? Why didn't you take an ax when I was asleep an' knock me over the head with it?—What did I say? Sh! Only don't tell a livin' soul a word, Mrs Hassenreuter [She rumps up and arranges her hair by the help of many hairpins] MANAGER HASEN-

REUTER appears in the doorway.

*Hassenreuter*. [Starting at the sight of his family]

"Behold, behold, Timotheus,

Here are the cranes of Ibcus!"

Didn't you tell me there was a shipping agent's office in the neighbourhood, Mrs John—[To WALBURGA] Ah, yes, my child! While, with the frivolousness of youth you have been thinking of your pleasure and nothing but your pleasure, your papa has been running about for three whole hours again purely on business—[To SPITTA] You wouldn't be in such a hurry to establish a family, young man, if you had the least suspicion how hard it is—a struggle from day to day—to get even the wretched, mouldy necessary bit of daily bread for one's wife and child! I trust it will never be your fate to be suddenly hurled one day, quite penniless, into the underworld of Berlin and be obliged to struggle for a naked livelihood for yourself and those dear to you, breast to breast with others equally desperate, in subterranean holes and passages! But you may all congratulate me! A week from now we will be in Strassburg [MRS HASENREUTER, WALBURGA and SPITTA all press his hand] Everything else will be adjusted

*Mrs Hassenreuter* You have fought an heroic battle for us during these past years, papa And you did it without stooping to anything unworthy

*Hassenreuter* It was a fight like that of drowning men who struggle for planks in the water My noble costumes, made to body forth the dreams of poets, in what dens of vice, on what reeking bodies have they not passed their nights—*odi profanum vulgus*—only that a few pennies of rental might clatter in my cashbox! But let us turn to more cheerful thoughts The freight waggon, alias the cart of Thespis, is at the door in order to effect the removal of our Penates to happier fields—[Suddenly turning to SPITTA] My excellent Spitta, I demand your word of honour that, in your so-called despair, you two do not commit some irreparable folly In return I promise to lend my ear to any utterances of yours characterised by a modicum of good sense—Finally I've come to you, Mrs John, firstly because the officers bar all the exits and

will permit no one to go out, and secondly because I would like exceedingly to know why a man like myself, at the very moment when his triumphant flag is fluttering in the wind again, should have become the object of a malicious newspaper report!

*Mrs Hassenreuter* Dear Harro, Mrs John doesn't understand you

*Hassenreuter* Aha! Then let us begin *ab ovo* I have letters here [*he shows a bundle of them*] one, two, three, five—about a dozen! In these letters unknown but malicious individuals congratulate me upon an event which is said to have taken place in my storage loft I would pay no attention to these communications were they not confirmed by a news item in the papers according to which a newborn infant is said to have been found in the loft of a costumer in the suburbs . a costumer, forsooth! I would have said nothing, I repeat, if this item had not perplexed me Undoubtedly there is a case of mistaken identity involved here In spite of that, I don't like to have the report stick to me Especially since this cub of a reporter speaks of the costumer as being a bankrupt manager of barn stormers Read it, mama "The Stork Visits Costumer" I'll box that fellow's ears! This evening my appointment at Strassburg is to be made public in the papers and at the same time I am to be offered as a kind of comic dessert *urbis et orbi* As if it were not obvious that of all curses that of being made ridiculous is the worst!

*Mrs John* You say there's policemen at the door downstairs, sir?

*Hassenreuter* Yes, and their watch is so close that the funeral procession of Mrs Knobbe's baby has been brought to a standstill They won't even let the little coffin and the horrid fellow from the burial society who is carrying it go out to the carriage

*Mrs John* What child's funeral was that?

*Hassenreuter* Don't you know? It's the little son of Mrs Knobbe which was brought up to me in so mysterious a way by two women and died almost under my very eyes, probably of exhaustion *A propos*

*Mrs John* The Knobbe woman's child is dead?

*Hassenreuter* *A propos*, Mrs John, I was

going to say that you ought really to know how the affair of those two half-crazy women who got hold of the child finally ended?

*Mrs John* Well now, tell me, ain't it like the very finger o' God that they didn't take my little Adelbert an' that he didn't die?

*Hassenreuter* Just why? I don't understand the logic of that On the other hand, I have been asking myself whether the confused speeches of the Polish girl, the theft committed in my loft, and the milk bottle which Quaquaro brought down in a boot—whether all these things had not something to do with the notice in the papers

*Mrs John* No, there ain't no connection between them things Has you seen Paul, sir?

*Hassenreuter* Paul? Ah yes, that's your husband Yes, yes Indeed I saw him in conversation with detective Puppe, who visited me too in connection with the theft

[*JOHN enters*]

*John* Well, Jette, wasn't I right? This here thing's happened soon enough!

*Mrs John* What's happened?

*John* D'you want me to go an' earn the thousand crown's reward what's offered accordin' to placards on the news pillars by the chief o' police's office for denouncin' the criminal?

*Mrs John* How's that?

*John* Don't you know that all this manoeuvrin' o' police an' detectives is started on account o' Bruno?

*Mrs John* How so? Where? What is it? What's been started?

*John* The funeral's been stopped an' two o' the mourners—queer customers they is, too—has been taken prisoner Yes, sir! That's the pass things has come to, Mrs Hassenreuter I'm a man, sir, what's tied to a woman as has a brother what's been pursued by the criminal police an' by detectives because he killed a woman not far from the river under a lilac bush

*Hassenreuter* But my dear Mr John God forbid that that be true!

*Mrs John* That's a lie! My brother don' do nothin' like that

*John* Aw, don' he though, Jette? Mr Hassenreuter, I was sayin' the other day what kind of a brother that is! [*He no-*

*ices the bunch of lilacs and takes it from the table*] Look at this here! That there monster's been in my home! If he comes back I'll be the first one that'll take him, bound hand an' foot, an' deliver him up to justice! [*He searches through the whole room*]

*Mrs John* You c'n tell dam' fools there's such a thing as justice. There ain't no justice, not even in heaven. There wasn't a soul here. An' that bit o' lilac I brought along from Hangelsberg where a big bush of it grows behind your sister's house.

*John* Jette, you wasn't at my sister's at all. Quaquaro jus' told me that! They proved that at headquarters. You was seen in the park by the river . . .

*Mrs John* Lies!

*John* An' 'way out in the suburbs where you passed the night in a harbour!

*Mrs John* What? D'you come into your own house to tear everythin' into bits?

*John* All right! I ain't sorry that things has come to this. There ain't no more secrets between us here. I foretold all that.

*Hassenreuter* [*Tense with interest*] Did that Polish girl who fought like a lioness for Mrs Knobbe's baby the other day ever show herself again?

*John* She's the very one. She's the one what they pulled out o' the water this morning. An' I has to say it without bitin' my tongue off. Bruno Mechelke took that girl's life.

*Hassenreuter* [*Quickly*] Then she was probably his mistress?

*John* Ask mother! I don't know about that! That's what I was scared of, that's the reason I rather didn't come home at all no more, that my own wife was loaded down with a crowd like that an' didn't have the strength to shake it off.

*Hassenreuter* Come, children.

*John* Why so? You jus' stay!

*Mrs John* You don't has to go an' open the windows an' cry out everythin' for all the world to hear! It's bad enough if fate's brought a misfortune like that on us. Go on! Make a noise about it if you want to. But you won't see me very soon again.

*Hassenreuter*. And you mean to say that that . . .

*John* That's jus' what I'll do! Jus' that! I'll call in anybody as wants to know

—outa the street, offa the hall, the carpenter outa the yard, the boys an' the girls what takes their confirmation lessons—I'll call 'em all an' I'll tell 'em what a woman got into on account o' her fool love for her brother!

*Hassenreuter* And so that good-looking girl who laid claim to the child is actually dead to-day?

*John* Maybe she was good-lookin'. I don't know nothin' about that, whether she was pretty or ugly. But it's a fac' that she's lyin' in the morgue this day.

*Mrs John* I c'n tell you what she was! She was a common, low wench! She had dealn's with a Tyrolese feller that didn't want to have nothin' more to do with her an' she had a child by him. An' she'd ha' liked to kill that child while it was in her own womb. Then she came to fetch it with that Kielbacke what's been in prison eighteen months as a professional baby-killer. Whether she had any dealn's with Bruno, I don't know! Maybe so an' maybe not! An' anyhow, I don't see how it concerns me what Bruno's gone an' done.

*Hassenreuter* So you *did* know the girl in question, Mrs John?

*Mrs John* How so? I didn't know her a bit! I'm only sayin' what everybody as knows says about that there girl.

*Hassenreuter* You're an honourable woman, you're an honourable man, Mr John. This matter with your wayward brother is terrible enough as a fact, but it ought not seriously to undermine your married life. Stay honest and . . .

*John* Not a bit of it! I don't stay with such people, not anywhere near 'em. [*He brings his fist down on the table, taps at the walls, stamps on the floor*] Listen to the crackin'! Listen how the plaster'n' comes rumblin' down behind the wall-paper! Everythin's rotten here, everythin's worm eaten! Everythin's undermined by varmint an' by rats an' by mice. [*He see-saws on a loose plank in the floor*] Everythin' totters! Any minute the whole business might crash down into the cellar. —[*He opens the door*] Selma! Selma! I'm goin' to pull outa here before the whole thing just falls together into a heap o' rubbish!

*Mrs John* What do you want o' Selma?

*John* Selma is goin' to take that child

an' I'll go with 'em on the train an' take it out to my sister

*Mrs John* You'll hear from me if you try that! Oh, you jus' try it!

*John* Is my child to be brought up in surroundin's like this, an' maybe some day be driven over the roofs with Bruno an' maybe end in the penitentiary?

*Mrs John* [*Cries out at him*] That ain't your child at all! Y'understan'?

*John* 'S that so? Well, we'll see if an honest man can't be master o' his own child what's got a mother that's gone crazy an' is in the hands of a crowd of murderers I'd like to see who's in the right there an' who's the stronger *Selma*!

*Mrs John* I'll scream! I'll tear open the windows! *Mrs Hassenreuter*, they wants to rob a mother o' her child! That's my right that I'm the mother o' my child! Ain't that my right? Ain't that so, *Mrs Hassenreuter*? They're surroundin' me! They wants to rob me o' my rights! Ain't it goin' to belong to me what I picked up like refuse, what was lying on rags half-dead, an' I had to rub it an' knead it all I could before it began to breathe an' come to life slowly? If it wasn't for me, it would ha' been covered with earth these three weeks!

*Hassenreuter* Mr John, to play the part of an arbitrator between married people is not ordinarily my function It's too thankless a task and one's experiences are, as a rule, too unhappy But you should not permit your feeling of honour, justly wounded as, no doubt, it is, to hurry you into acts that are rash For, after all, your wife is not responsible for her brother's act Let her have the child! Don't increase the misery of it all by such hardness toward your wife as must hurt her most cruelly and unnecessarily

*Mrs John* Paul, that child's like as if it was cut outa my own flesh! I bought that child with my blood It ain't enough that all the world's after me an' wants to take it away from me, now you gotta join 'em an' do the same! That's the thanks a person gets! Why it's like a pack of hungry wolves aroun' me You c'n kill me! But you can't touch my baby!

*John* I comes home, Mr *Hassenreuter*, only this mornin' I comes home with all my tools on the train, jolly as c'n be I

broke off all my connections in Hamburg Even if you don' earn so much, says I to myself, you'd rather be with your family, an' take up your child in your arms a little, or maybe take it on your knee a little! That was about the way I was thinkin'!

*Mrs John* Paul! Here, Paul! [*She goes close up to him*] You c'n tear my heart out if you want to! [*She stares long at him, then runs behind the partition, whence her loud weeping is heard*]

[*SELMA enters from the hall. She is dressed in mourning garments and carries a little wreath in her hand*]

*Selma* What is I to do? You called me, Mr John

*John* Put on your cloak, *Selma* Ax your mother if you c'n go an' take a trip with me to Hangelsberg You'll earn a bit o' money doin' it All you gotta do is to take my child on your arm an' come along with me

*Selma* No, I ain' goin' to touch that child no more

*John* Why not?

*Selma* No, I'm afraid, Mr John! I'm that scared at the way mama an' the police lieutenant screamed at me

*Mrs John* [*Appears*] Why did they scream at you?

*Selma* [*Crying vociferously*] Officer Schierke even slapped my face

*Mrs John* Well, I'll see about that he oughta try that again

*Selma* I can't tell why that Polish girl took my little brother away If I'd known that my little brother was goin' to die, I'd ha' jumped at her throat first Now little Gundofried's coffin stands on the stairs I believe mama has convulsions an' is lyin' down in Quaquaro's alcove An' me they wants to take to the charity organisation, *Mrs John* [*She weeps*]

*Mrs John* Then you c'n be reel happy. They can't treat you worse'n you was treated at home

*Selma* An' I gotta go to court! An' maybe they'll take me to gaol!

*Mrs John* On account o' what?

*Selma* Because they says I took the child what the Polish girl had up in the loft an' carried it down to you

*Hassenreuter* So a child actually was born up there



Selma Certainly.

Hassenreuter In whose loft?

Selma Why, where them actors lives! It ain't none o' my business! How is I to know anythin' about it? All I c'n say is . . .

Mrs John You better hurry on about your business now, Selma! You got a clean conscience! You don't has to care for what people jabber

Selma An' I don't want to betray nothin' neither, Mrs John

John [*Grasps SELMA, who is about to run away, and holds her fast*] Naw, you ain't goin'! Here you stays! The truth! "I don't want to betray nothin'," you says You heard that, too, Mrs Hassenreuter? An' Mr Spitta an' the young lady here heard it too The truth! You ain't goin' to leave this here spot before I don't know the rights o' this matter about Bruno an' his mistress an' if you people did away with that child!

Mrs John Paul, I swear before God that I ain't done away with it!

John Well . . . ? Out with what you know, girl! I been seen' for a long time that there's been some secret scheming between you an' my wife. There ain't no use no more in all that winkin' an noddin' Is that child dead or alive?

Selma No, that child is alive all right

Hassenreuter The one, you mean, that you carried down here under your apron or in some such way?

John If it's dead you c'n be sure that you an' Bruno'll both be made a head shorter'n you are!

Selma I'm tellin' you the child is alive

Hassenreuter But you said at first that you hadn't brought down any child at all

John An' you pretend to know nothin' o' that whole business, mother? [*Mrs JOHN stares at him, SELMA gazes helplessly and confusedly at Mrs JOHN*] Mother, you got rid o' the child o' Bruno an' that Polish wench an' then, when people came after it, you went an' substutooted that little crittur o' Knobbe's

Walburga [*Very pale and conquering her repugnance*] Tell me, Mrs John, what happened on that day when I so foolishly took flight up into the loft at papa's coming? I'll explain that to you later, papa On that occasion, as became clear to me

later, I saw the Polish girl twice first with Mrs John and then with her brother Hassenreuter. You, Walburga?

Walburga Yes, papa Alice Rutterbusch was with you that day, and I had made an engagement to meet Erich here He came to see you finally but failed to meet me because I kept hidden

Hassenreuter I can't say that I have any recollection of that

Mrs. Hassenreuter [*To her husband*] The girl has really passed more than one sleepless night on account of this matter

Hassenreuter Well, Mrs John, if you are inclined to attach any weight to the opinion of a former jurist who exchanged the law for an artistic career only after having been plucked in his bar examination—in that case let me assure you that, under the circumstances, ruthless frankness will prove your best defense

John Jette, where did you put that there child? The head detective told me—I jus' remember it now—that they're still huntin' aroun' for the child o' the dead woman! Jette, for God's sake, don't you have 'em suspect you o' layin' hands on that there newborn child jus' to get the proofs o' your brother's rascality outa the world!

Mrs John Me lay hands on little Adelbert, Paul?

John Nobody ain't talkin' o' Adelbert here [*To SELMA*] I'll knock your head off for you if you don't tell me this minute what's become o' the child o' Bruno an' the Polish girl!

Selma Why, it's behind your own partition, Mr John!

John Where is it, Jette?

Mrs John I ain't goin' to tell that

[*The child begins to cry*]

John [*To SELMA*] The truth! Or I'll turn you over to the police, y'understan'? See this rope? I'll tie you hand and foot!

Selma [*Involuntarily, in the extremity of her fear*] It's cryin' now! You know that child well enough, Mr John

John Me?

[*Utterly at sea he looks first at SELMA, then at HASSENREUTER Suddenly a suspicion flashes upon him as he turns his gaze upon his wife He believes that he is beginning to understand and wavers*]

*Mrs. John* Don't you let a low down lie like that take you in, Paul! It'll all invented by the fine mother that girl has outa spite! Paul, why d'you look at me so?

*Selma* That's low of you, mother John, that you wants to make me out so bad now. Then I won't be careful neither not to let nothin' out! You know all right that I carried the young lady's child down here an' put it in the nice, clean bed. I c'n swear to that! I c'n take my oath on that!

*Mrs. John* Lies! Lies! You says that my child ain't my child!

*Selma* Why, you ain't had no child at all, Mrs. John!

*Mrs. John* [*Embraces her husband's knees*] Oh, that ain't true at all!

*John* You leave me alone, Henrietta! Don't dirty me with your hands!

*Mrs. John* Paul, I couldn't do no different. I had to do that. I was deceived myself an' then I told you about it in my letter to Hamburg an' then you was so happy an' I couldn't disappoint you an' I thought it's gota be! We c'n has a child this way too an' then . . .

*John* [*With ominous calmness*] Lemme think it over, Jette [*He goes to the chest of drawers, opens a drawer and flings the baby linen and baby dresses that he finds therein into the middle of the room*] C'n anybody understan' how week after week, an' month after month, all day long an' half the nights she could ha' worked on this trash till her fingers was bloody?

*Mrs. John* [*Gathers up the linen and the dresses in insane haste and hides them carefully in the table drawer and elsewhere*] Paul, don' do that! You c'n do anythin' else! It's like tearin' the last rag offa my naked body!

*John* [*Stops, grasps his forehead and sinks into a chair*] If that's true, mother, I'll be too ashamed to show my face again [*He seems to sink into himself, crosses his arms over his head and hides his face*]

*Hassenreuter* Mrs. John, how could you permit yourself to be forced into a course of so much error and deception? You've entangled yourself in the most frightful way! Come, children! Unhappily there is nothing more for us to do here.

*John* [*Gets up*] You might as well take me along with you, sir

*Mrs. John* Go on! Go on! I don't need you!

*John* [*Turning to her, coldly*] So you bargained for that there kid someway an' when its mother wanted it back you got Bruno to kill her?

*Mrs. John* You ain't no husband o' mine! How could that be! You been bought by the police! You took money to give me up to my death! Go on, Paul, you ain't human even! You got poison in your eyes an' teeth like wolves! Go on an' whistle so they'll come an' take me! Go on, I says! Now I see the kind o' man you is an' I'll despise you to the day o' judgment! [*She is about to run from the room when policeman SCHIERKE and QUARARO appear*]

*Schierke* Hold on! Nobody can't get outa this room.

*John* Come right in, Emil! You c'n come in reel quiet, officer. Everythin's in order here an' all right.

*Quararo* Don't get excited, Paul! This here don't concern you!

*John* [*With rising rage*] Did you laugh, Emil?

*Quararo* Man alive, why should I? Only Mr. Schierke is to take that there little one to the orphan house in a cab.

*Schierke* Yessir! That's right. Where is the child?

*John* How is I to know where all the brats offa junk heaps that witches use in their doin's gets to in the end? Watch the chimney! Maybe it flew outa there on a broomstick.

*Mrs. John* Paul!—Now it ain't to live! No, outa spite! Now it don' has to live! Now its gotta go down under the ground with me!

[*With lightning-like rapidity she has run behind the partition and reappears at once with the child and makes for the door. HASENREUTER and SPITTA throw themselves in front of the desperate woman, intent on saving the child*]

*Hassenreuter* Stop! I'll interfere now! I have the right to do so at this point! Whomever the little boy may belong to—so much the worse if its mother has been murdered—it was born on my premises! Forward, Spitta! Fight for it, my boy!



Here your propensities come properly into play! Go on! Careful! That's it! Bravo! Be as careful as though it were the Christ child! Bravo! That's it! You yourself are at liberty, Mrs John We don't restrain you. You must only leave us the little boy.

[Mrs JOHN *rushes madly out*]

Schierke Here you stays!

Mrs Hassenreuter The woman is desperate Stop her! Hold her!

John [With a sudden change] Look out for mother! Mother! Stop her! Catch hold o' her! Mother! Mother!

[SELMA, SCHIERKE and JOHN hurry after Mrs JOHN SPITTA, HASSENREUTER, Mrs HASSENREUTER and WALBURGA busy themselves about the child, which lies on the table]

Hassenreuter [Carefully wrapping the infant] The horrible woman may be desperate for all I care! But for that reason she needn't destroy the child

Mrs Hassenreuter But, dearest papa, isn't it quite evident that the woman has pinned her love, silly to the point of madness as it is, to this very infant? Thoughtless and harsh words may actually drive the unhappy creature to her death

Hassenreuter. I used no harsh words, mama

Spitta An unmistakable feeling assures me that the child has only now lost its mother

Quaquaro That's true It's father ain't aroun' an' don' want to have nothin' to do with it He got married yesterday to the widow of a man who owned a merry-go-round! Its mother was no better'n she should be! An' if Mrs Kielbacke was to take care of it, it'd die like ten outa every dozen what she boards The way things has come aroun' now—it'll have to die too

Hassenreuter Unless our Father above who sees all things has differently determined

Quaquaro D'you mean Paul, the mason? Not now! No sir! I knows him! He's a ticklish customer where his honour is concerned

Mrs Hassenreuter. Just look how the

child lies there! It's incomprehensible! Fine linen—even lace! Neat and sweet as a doll! It makes one's heart ache to think how suddenly it has become an utterly forlorn and forsaken orphan

Spitta Were I judge in Israel . . .

Hassenreuter You would erect a monument to Mrs John! It may well be that many an element of the heroic, much that is hiddenly meritorious, lurks in these obscure fates and struggles But not even Kohlhaas of Kohlhaasenbruck with his mad passion for justice could fight his way through! Let us use practical Christianity! Perhaps we could permanently befriend the child

Quaquaro You better keep your hands offa that!

Hassenreuter Why?

Quaquaro. Unless you're crazy to get rid o' money an' are anxious for all the worries an' the troubles you'll have with the public charities an' the police an' the courts

Hassenreuter. For such things I have no time to spare, I confess

Spitta Won't you admit that a genuinely tragic fatality has been active here?

Hassenreuter Tragedy is not confined to any class of society I always told you that!

[SELMA, *breathless, opens the outer door*]

Selma Mr John! Mr John! Oh, Mr John!

Mrs Hassenreuter Mr John isn't here What do you want, Selma?

Selma Mr. John, you're to come out on the street!

Hassenreuter Quiet, quiet now! What is the matter?

Selma [Breathlessly] Your wife your wife . The whole street's crowded . . 'buses an' tramcars . . nobody can't get through her arms is stretched out your wife's lyn' on her face down there

Mrs Hassenreuter Why, what has happened?

Selma Lord! Lord God in Heaven! Mrs John has killed herself

THE END

LA MALQUERIDA

By JACINTO BENAVENTE

*Translated from the Spanish by JOHN GARRETT UNDERHILL*

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## JACINTO BENAVENTE AND HIS PLAYS

JACINTO BENAVENTE, the author of *La Malquerida*, is not only the most distinguished of modern Spanish dramatists but is also one of the great original forces in modern drama. He was born in Madrid in 1866, studied law, travelled with a circus, became an actor, and mingled with persons of all sorts and degrees. Through his years of wandering he gathered much of that knowledge of life and the stage which characterize the prolific product that was to follow. With the production of his satirical comedy *The Governor's Lady* his fame was secure, and from that time he has continued to produce plays with all the fecundity characteristic of the Spanish genius. His popularity increased with the number of his plays. At length he was elected a member of the Spanish Academy, and, in 1922, was awarded the Nobel prize.

A variety of factors renders Benavente one of the most complex and perplexing, as well as one of the most interesting, of modern dramatists. Simply as a dramatist of new Spain, he is a product of the "movement of 1898" toward the creation of a national literature unfettered by tradition. But he is also a part of the general revolutionary movement in the theatre that in the late nineteenth century asserted itself in the experimental playhouses of Paris, Berlin, and London, the outcome of which was the sincerity that marks the work of Hauptmann in Germany, Brieux in France, and Shaw and Galsworthy in England. Thus it is not surprising that many foreign influences have affected the work of Benavente, and that certain of its multifarious phases are reminiscent, for instance, of the Italian, Pirandello, the Russian, Andreyev, and the Austrian, Schnitzler. But Benavente is not only modern and cosmopolitan, he is also the inheritor of the rich traditions of the Spanish theatre, and is certainly their debtor. Thus, as a man of the theatre simply, he is of both the new and the old. Again, in his capacity as a critic of life, while he cherishes essentially Spanish traditions and ideas, he yet maintains an outlook upon the world clear-eyed and characteristically modern. Finally, and as an additional factor in his complexity, his plays (there are almost a hundred of them) not only vastly outnumber those of any other great modern dramatist, but cover a wider range in technique, subject-matter, tone, and style than do those of any two or even three of his contemporaries. They include satirical comedies, romantic comedies, realistic dramas, romantic dramas, psychological plays, both realistic and fantastic, pure fantasies, tragic or comic, historical plays, moralistic plays, farces, fairy plays, and pageants. Here is represented every method of technique from naturalism to sheer fantasy, every social class from peasant to king, every tone from farce to tragedy.

Through it all, Benavente is supremely intellectual and utterly sophisticated. With all his purely theatrical dexterity, he is primarily the dramatist of character and ideas. His attitude toward life is usually that of the observer and analyst, accepting conditions without protest. This is as true of *The Governor's Lady* as of the witty yet profound searching of life's ultimate values in *The Bonds of Interest* and the stark human passion of *La Malquerida*. In his later plays he has become more of the avowed moralizer and propagandist.

*La Malquerida* is the representative drama of rural life in modern Spain. It is interesting to compare with this vivid piece another powerful Spanish play, *Marta of the Lowlands*, by the Catalan dramatist Angel Guimera, but no matter with what similar play of any country it be compared, *La Malquerida* holds its own. Though a drama of elemental passions, it is yet suffused with the spirit of the "new psychology." Powerful theatric situations are saved from being mere melodrama by the fact that they are essentially the inevitable expression of profound emotion, and hence are lifted up to the plane of authentic tragedy.

*La Malquerida* was first produced in Madrid in 1912, with Maria Guerrero in the rôle of Raimunda, and met with immediate and unqualified success. In 1920 it was produced in New York, under the title of *The Passion Flower*, and again was favorably received. In May, 1926, it was presented in Spanish in New York by Maria Guerrero.

## CHARACTERS

RAIMUNDA

ACACIA, *daughter of RAIMUNDA*

JULIANA, *an old servant in RAIMUNDA's household*

DOÑA ISABEL

MILAGROS, *daughter of*

DOÑA ISABEL

FIDELA

ENGRACIA

BERNABEA

GASPARA

ESTEBAN, *husband of RAIMUNDA and step-father of ACACIA*

NORBERT, *cousin of ACACIA and her rejected suitor*

FAUSTINO, *the betrothed of ACACIA*

TÍO EUSEBIA, *father of FAUSTINO*

BERNABÉ } *employes on RAIMUNDA's farm*

RUBIO }

*The action takes place in Castile at the present day*

# LA MALQUERIDA

## ACT ONE

*A room in a rich farmer's house, situated on the outskirts of a pueblo, or small town*

*As the curtain rises, RAIMUNDA, ACACIA, DOÑA ISABEL, MILAGROS, FIDELA, ENGRACIA, GASPARA, and BERNABEA are bidding farewell to four or five women and young girls who are taking leave. While the others stand, DOÑA ISABEL remains seated*

*Gaspara* God be with you! Good-by, Raimunda

*Bernabea* God be with you, Doña Isabel—and you, too, Acacia, and your mother. May everything turn out for the best.

*Raimunda* Thanks. May we all live to see it. Go down with them, Acacia.

All Good-by! Good-by!

*[The women and girls retire, keeping up an animated chatter. ACACIA accompanies them.]*

*Doña Isabel* Bernabea is a nice girl.

*Engracia* It is only a year since she got over that trouble. No one would ever believe it to look at her now.

*Doña Isabel* I hear that she is going to be married.

*Fidela* Yes, come next fiesta—God willing and San Roque.

*Doña Isabel* I am always the last person in the village to pick up gossip. When you have nothing but trouble at home, naturally you lose interest in what is taking place outside.

*Engracia* How is your husband?

*Doña Isabel* He varies—up and down. The rest of us are thoroughly worn out. We are not able to leave the house, not even to attend mass upon Sundays. I am used to it myself, but it is hard on my daughter.

*Engracia* I think you make a mistake to keep her at home so much. This is a great year for weddings.

*Doña Isabel* But not for her. I am afraid that we shall never be able to find a man who measures up to her expectations.

*Fidela* All the same, it never struck me that she was born to be a nun. Some day she will happen on the right one.

*Doña Isabel* How are you pleased with this match, Raimunda? I must say you don't seem altogether cheerful about it.

*Raimunda* A wedding is always something of an experiment.

*Engracia* If you aren't satisfied, I am sure I don't know who could ever be. Your daughter has had the pick of the entire village.

*Fidela* She's not likely to want for anything, either. We all know how well they will both be provided for, which is not a thing you can afford to overlook.

*Raimunda* Milagros, run down-stairs and enjoy yourself with Acacia and the boys. I hate to see you sitting there all alone in a corner.

*Doña Isabel* Yes, do go down—The child is as innocent as the day that God made her.

*Milagros* Excuse me.

*Raimunda* We might all take another glass and some *luzcochos*.

*Doña Isabel* Thanks, I have had enough.

*Raimunda* No, no, come, everybody. This is nothing.

*Doña Isabel* Acacia doesn't seem as happy as you might expect, either, considering that her engagement was only announced to-day.

*Raimunda* She is as innocent, too, as God made her. I never saw any one like her, she is so silent. She distracts me. For weeks together she has not one word to say. Then there are times when she begins to talk, and her tongue runs until it fairly takes your breath away. It is a terrible thing to hear.

*Engracia* Naturally, you have spoiled her. After you lost the three boys she was all that you had, and you were too careful. Her father would have plucked the birds out of the air if she had asked for them, and you were no better. When he died—God rest his soul—then the child was jealous of you. She didn't like it when you married again, and she has never gotten over that grudge either.

*Raimunda* But what was I to do? I didn't want to marry again. I should never have thought of it if my brothers hadn't turned out the way that they did. If we had not had a man in the house to look after us, my

daughter and I would have been in the street before this, and you know it

*Doña Isabel* Yes, this world is no place for single women. You were left a widow very young

*Raimunda* But I can't see why my daughter should be jealous. I am her mother, yet it would be hard to say which of us loves or spoils her the most. Esteban has never treated her like a stepdaughter

*Doña Isabel* No wonder, you had no children of your own

*Raimunda* He never comes nor goes without bringing her a present. He never thinks of such a thing with me—although, of course, I have no feeling. She is my daughter, it only makes me love him more to see how fond he is of her. You won't believe it when I tell you, but she would never let him kiss her even when she was a child, much less now. I have seldom had to lay my hand on her, but whenever I have, it was on that account

*Fidela* Nobody can make me believe, just the same, that your daughter isn't in love with her cousin

*Raimunda* Norbert? She turned him off herself between night and morning, and that was the end of it. That is another thing I can't understand. We never could find out what did happen between them

*Fidela* Nor anybody else. Nobody has ever been able to explain it. There must have been some reason, but what it was is a mystery.

*Engracia* Well, she never seemed to regret it, which is more than I can say for him. She never looked at him again, but he hasn't changed. When he heard that Faustino was coming over with his father to-day to settle the matter and arrange things, he turned on his heel, took his gun, and went straight up to Los Berrocales. People who saw him said that you would have thought that it had broken his heart

*Raimunda* Neither Esteban nor I influenced her in the least. She broke with Norbert herself, just as they were ready to publish the banns. Everybody knows it. Then she consented to see Faustino. He always had a fancy for her. His father is a great friend of Esteban's—they belong to the same party and always work together. They have known each other for a long time. Whenever we went to Encinar for the Feast of the Virgin—or for any other fiesta—or if they were the ones who

came here, it was easy to see that the boy was nervous. When she was around he didn't know what to do. He knew that there was something between her and her cousin, but he never said one word until the break came, whatever the reason was, which we don't know—no, not one, but as soon as they heard that she was done with her cousin, Faustino's father spoke to Esteban, and Esteban spoke to me, and I spoke to my daughter, and she seemed to be pleased, so now they are going to be married. That is all there is to it. If she is not satisfied, then God have mercy on her soul, because we are only doing it to please her. She has had her own way in everything

*Doña Isabel* Then she ought to be happy. Why not? The boy is a fine fellow. Everybody says so

*Engracia* Yes, we all feel as if he belonged in the village. He lives so near by, and his family is so well known that nobody ever thinks of them as strangers

*Fidela* Tío Eusebio owns more land here than at Encinar

*Engracia* Certainly, if you stop to count. He inherited everything from his Uncle Manolito, and when the town lands were sold, two years ago, they went to him

*Doña Isabel* The family is the richest in the neighborhood

*Fidela* Undoubtedly. There may be four brothers, but each of them will come into a fortune

*Engracia* Your daughter is not going bare-foot, either

*Raimunda* No, she is an only child and will inherit everything. Esteban has taken good care of the farm which she had from her father, he could not have done more if she had been his own child

[*The Angelus sounds*]

*Doña Isabel* The Angelus! [*The women mumble the words of the prayer*] It is time for us to be going, Raimunda. Telesforo expects his supper early—if the nibble of nothing which he takes can be called supper

*Engracia* It is time for us all to go

*Fidela* We were all thinking the same thing

*Raimunda* But won't you stay to supper? I don't urge Doña Isabel—I know she ought not to leave her husband. He is impatient to see her back

*Engracia* Yes. We all have husbands to look after. Thanks just the same.

*Doña Isabel* I suppose the young man stays to supper?

*Raimunda* No, he is going home with his father to Encinar. They cannot spend the night. There is no moon, so they should have been on the road long ago. It is getting late and the days are growing shorter. Before you know it, it is black night.

*Engracia* I hear them coming up now to say good-by.

*Raimunda* I thought so.

[ACACIA, MILAGROS, ESTEBAN, Tío EUSEBIO, and FAUSTINO enter.]

*Esteban* Raimunda, here are Tío Eusebio and Faustino to say good-by.

*Eusebio* We must be off before dark. The roads are in terrible shape after the heavy rains.

*Esteban* There are some bad stretches.

*Doña Isabel* Well, what has the boy to say for himself? I suppose he doesn't remember me. It is five years since I have seen him.

*Eusebio* Don't you remember Doña Isabel?

*Faustino* I do, *si señor*. I was afraid she didn't remember me.

*Doña Isabel* No fear of that! My husband was *alcalde* at the time, when you gave us that awful fright, running after the bull. If you had been killed, I don't know what would have happened. I didn't enjoy it. God help San Roquel—it would have put an end to his fiesta. We certainly thought you were dead.

*Engracia* Julian, Eudosa's husband, was caught that year too.

*Faustino* I remember, *si, señora*.

*Eusebio* He remembers perfectly, because I gave him a sound thrashing when he got home—which he deserved.

*Faustino* I was a boy at the time.

*Doña Isabel* Yes—the boy of it! However, you have picked out the finest girl in the village, and she will have no reason to regret her choice either. But we must be going. You have business of your own to attend to.

*Esteban* No, they have attended to everything already.

*Doña Isabel* Good night, then. Come, Milagros.

*Acacia* I want her to stay to supper, but she is afraid to ask you. Do let her stay, Doña Isabel!

*Raimunda* Yes, do. Bernabé and Juliana will see her home afterward, and Esteban can go along, too, if necessary.

*Doña Isabel* No, we will send for her. You can stay, to please Acacia.

*Raimunda* They have so many things to talk over.

*Doña Isabel* God be with you. Adios, Tío Eusebio and Esteban.

*Eusebio* Adios, Doña Isabel. My best sympathy to your husband.

*Doña Isabel* Which he appreciates, coming from you.

*Engracia* Good-by! A safe return!

*Frida* God be with you!

[The women go out.]

*Eusebio* Doña Isabel looks remarkably young. She must be my age at least. Well, "To have and to hold is to prepare to grow old," as the proverb has it. Doña Isabel was one of the best of them in her day, and in her day there were plenty.

*Esteban* Sit down, Tío Eusebio. What is your hurry?

*Eusebio* No, don't tempt me, it's time to go. Night is coming on. Don't bother about us. We have the hands along and shan't need you.

*Esteban* No, the walk will do me good. I'll see you to the *arroyo* at least.

[RAIMUNDA, ACACIA, and MILAGROS re-enter.]

*Eusebio* If you young folks have anything to say, now is the time for you to say it.

*Acacia* No, we have settled everything.

*Eusebio* So you think.

*Raimunda* Come, come! Don't you try to embarrass my daughter, Tío Eusebio.

*Acacia* Thanks for everything.

*Eusebio* What? Is that a way to thank me?

*Acacia* It was a lovely present.

*Eusebio* The showiest thing we could find.

*Raimunda* Entirely too much so for a farmer's daughter.

*Eusebio* Too much? Not a bit of it! If I'd had my way, it would have had more jewels in it than the Holy Monstrance at Toledo. Give your mother-in-law a good hug.

*Raimunda* Yes, come, boy. I must learn to love you or I shall never forgive you for taking her away. My heart goes with her.

*Esteban* Now don't begin to cry! Come, Acacia! You don't want to pass yourself off for a Magdalen.

*Milagros* Raimunda! Acacia! [Bursts into tears also.]

*Esteban* That's right—all together! Come, come!



*Eusebio* Don't be foolish! Tears are for the dead You are only going to be married Try to be happy and enjoy yourselves, everybody is willing Adios and good night!

*Rarmunda* Adios, Tío Eusebio Tell Julia that I don't know whether I shall ever be able to forgive her for not coming over to-day

*Eusebio* You know how bad her sight is We'd have had to hitch up the cart, and it was up at Los Berrocales We are beginning to slaughter

*Rarmunda* Tell her how sorry I am. May she be better soon

*Eusebio* Thanks to you

*Rarmunda* Now you had better be going It is getting dark [To ESTEBAN] Don't be long

*Eusebio* I tell him not to come

*Esteban* Nonsense! It isn't any trouble I'll go as far as the arroyo Don't wait supper for me

*Rarmunda* No, we will wait We're not anxious to eat alone to-night Milagros won't mind if we are late

*Milagros* It makes no difference to me

*Eusebio* God be with you all! Good-by!

*Rarmunda* No, we are coming down to see you out

*Faustino* I . I have something to say to Acacia first

*Eusebio* It will have to wait until to-morrow You have had the whole day to yourselves

*Faustino* Yes, but with so many people around, I had no chance

*Eusebio* Before we were through I knew we were going to get some of this nonsense

*Faustino* It isn't nonsense Only I promised mother before we started to give Acacia this scapulary The nuns in the convent made it on purpose for her

*Acacia* How lovely!

*Milagros* Oh! The Blessed Virgin of Carmen—with spangles all over!

*Rarmunda* Very pretty My daughter was always devoted to the Virgin Thank your mother for us We appreciate it

*Faustino* It has been blessed

*Eusebio* Good! Now you have got that off your mind I wonder what your mother would have thought if we'd taken it home again with us? I never saw such a boy! I wasn't so backward in my day I am sure I don't know whom he does take after

[All go out For a moment the stage

remains deserted Meanwhile it continues to grow darker Presently RAIMUNDA, ACACIA, and MILAGROS reappear]

*Rarmunda* They have made a long day of it It is night before they start How do you feel, my dear? Are you happy?

*Acacia* You can see for yourself

*Rarmunda* I can, can I? That is exactly what I want to do see for myself Nobody can ever tell how you feel

*Acacia* I am tired out

*Rarmunda* It has certainly been a long day I haven't had a minute's rest since five o'clock in the morning

*Milagros* Everybody has been here to congratulate you

*Rarmunda* The whole village, you might say, beginning with the priest, who was among the first We paid him for a mass, and gave him ten loaves of bread besides for the poor In our happiness it is only right to remember others who are not so fortunate Praise God, we want for nothing! Where are the matches?

*Acacia* Here they are, mother

*Rarmunda* Light the lamp, dear It makes me feel sad to sit in the dark [Calling] Juliana! Juliana! I wonder where she is?

*Juliana* [Down-stairs] What do you want?

*Rarmunda* Bring up the broom and dustpan

*Juliana* [Down-stairs] In a minute

*Rarmunda* I had better change my skirt while I think of it Nobody will be in now, it's so late

*Acacia* I might take off my dress

*Rarmunda* What for? There is nothing for you to do You have been busy all day

[JULIANA enters]

*Juliana* Show me that dust—

*Rarmunda* Stand the broom in the corner and take these things away Mind you scour them until they are clean, then put them back in the cupboard Be careful with those glasses! They are our best

*Juliana* Could I eat a cake?

*Rarmunda* Of course you can!—though I don't see how you manage to hold so much

*Juliana* I haven't touched a thing this whole day, God help me! I am my mother's own daughter Haven't I passed cake and wine to the entire village? Everybody has been here to-day That shows you what people think of this house—yes, and what

they think of Tío Eusebio and his family. Wait till you see the wedding! I know somebody who is going to give her a new gold piece, and somebody who is going to give her a silk embroidered quilt that has flowers all over it, so lifelike that the first thing she will want to do is pick them off of it. That will be a great day for her, praise God! Not one of us but will laugh and cry then, and I will be the first—after her mother, she will be first because it is her right, but you know me. I love you all in this house. Besides, you make me think of my dead daughter. She looked just like you do when she died, and we buried her.

*Raimunda* Never mind that, Juliana. Go along and don't dig up any more of your troubles. We have enough of our own already.

*Juliana* God grant that I may never be a trouble to you! But everything goes topsyturvy with me to-day, around and around, and every which way. The more you enjoy yourself the sadder it makes you feel. God forbid that I should ever drag in this child's poor dead father, who rests in heaven now, God bless him! But I wish he could have seen her to-day! He was fond of her.

*Raimunda* That will do, Juliana! That will do.

*Juliana* Don't talk like that to me, Raimunda. It's like a blow in the face, like beating a faithful hound. That's what I have been to you and your daughter and your house—a faithful hound, that has eaten your bread, God willing, in season and out—yes, and kept her self-respect while she was about it, and you know it. *[Goes out.]*

*Raimunda* Juliana!—She is right, though. She has always been like a faithful hound—faithful and loyal to us and our house. *[She begins to sweep.]*

*Acacia* Mother—

*Raimunda* Did you speak?

*Acacia* Will you let me have the key to this chest of drawers? I want to show Milagros some of my things.

*Raimunda* Yes, here it is, take the bunch. Sit down and rest while I go and keep an eye on the supper. *[She takes the broom and goes out.]*

*[ACACIA and MILAGROS seat themselves on the floor before the chest of drawers and open the lower drawer or compartment.]*

*Acacia* These earrings were a present from—well, from Esteban, since my mother isn't here. She always wants me to call him father.

*Milagros* Don't you know that he loves you?

*Acacia* Yes, but you can have only one father and mother. He brought me these handkerchiefs, too, from Toledo. The nuns embroidered the initials. See all these postcards—aren't they pretty?

*Milagros* What lovely ladies!

*Acacia* Yes, they're actresses from Madrid, or from Paris in France. Look at these boys—He brought me this box, too, it had candy in it.

*Milagros* I don't see how you can say then.

*Acacia* I don't say anything. I know he loves me, but I'd rather have been left alone with my mother.

*Milagros* You don't mean to tell me that your mother loves you any less on his account?

*Acacia* I don't know. She's wrapped up in him. How do I know, if she had to choose between me and that man?

*Milagros* I think it's wicked to talk like that. Suppose your mother hadn't married again, what would she do now when you get married? She would have no one to live with.

*Acacia* You don't suppose that I would ever have gotten married, do you, if I had been living alone with my mother?

*Milagros* Of course you would! What difference would it make?

*Acacia* Could I be as happy anywhere else as living here alone with my mother?

*Milagros* Don't be foolish. Everybody knows what a nice stepfather you have. If he hadn't been good there would have been talk, and I would have heard it. So would you and your mother.

*Acacia* I don't say that he isn't good. But all the same I wouldn't have married if my mother hadn't married again.

*Milagros* Do you know what I think?

*Acacia* What?

*Milagros* People are right when they say that you don't love Faustino. The one that you love is Norbert.

*Acacia* That's a lie! How could I love him?—after the way that he treated me.

*Milagros* Everybody says that you were the one who turned him off.

*Acacia* I did, did I? Yes, I suppose it was my fault! Anyway, we won't talk about it.

What do they know? I love Faustino better than I ever did Norbert

*Milagros* I hope you do Otherwise you oughtn't to marry him Did you hear that Norbert left the village this morning? He didn't want to be around

*Acacia* What does he care? Why to-day more than any other? It is nothing to him Here is the last letter he wrote me—after everything was over I never mean to see him again, I don't know what I am keeping it for It would be more sensible to tear it up [*She tears the letter into small pieces*] There! That ends it

*Milagros* What is the matter with you? You are all excited

*Acacia* It's what he says Now I am going to burn the pieces

*Milagros* Look out! The lamp will explode

*Acacia* [*Opening the window*] To the road with you! I'll scatter the ashes The wind blows them away It is over now, and I am glad of it Did you ever see such a dark night?

*Milagros* [*Following her to the window*] It is black as pitch—no moon, no stars . .

*Acacia* What was that?

*Milagros* Somebody slammed a door

*Acacia* It sounded to me like a shot

*Milagros* Nonsense! Who would be out shooting at this hour? Unless there is a fire somewhere . No, I don't see any glow in the sky

*Acacia* I am frightened Yes, I am——

*Milagros* Don't be silly!

*Acacia* [*Running suddenly to the door*] Mother! Mother!

*Raimunda* [*Down-stairs*] What is it?

*Acacia* Did you hear anything?

*Raimunda* [*Down-stairs*] Yes I sent Juhana to find out It's all right

*Acacia* Oh, mother!

*Raimunda* Don't be afraid! I am coming up

*Acacia* It was a shot! I know it was a shot!

*Milagros* Suppose it was? What of it?

*Acacia* God help us! [*RAIMUNDA enters*]

*Raimunda* Did it frighten you? Nothing is the matter

*Acacia* Mother, you are frightened yourself

*Raimunda* Because you are Naturally, I was frightened at first—your father hasn't

come back But it is silly Nothing could have happened What was that? Do you hear? Some one is down-stairs God help us!

*Acacia* Mother! Mother!

*Milagros* What do they say? What are they talking about?

*Raimunda* Stay where you are I am going down

*Acacia* Mother, don't you go!

*Raimunda* I can't make out what they say I am too excited Oh, Esteban, my heart! May no harm have come to you! [*She rushes out*]

*Milagros* There is a crowd down-stairs. They are coming in I can't make out what they say .

*Acacia* Something has happened! Something awful! I knew it all the time

*Milagros* So did I, only I didn't want to frighten you

*Acacia* What do you think?

*Milagros* Don't ask me! Don't ask!

*Raimunda* [*Down-stairs*] Holy Virgin! God save us! Terrible, terrible! Oh, his poor mother when she hears that her poor boy is dead—murdered! I can't believe it! What a terrible thing for us all!

*Acacia* What does she say? Did you hear?—Mother! Mother! Mother!

*Raimunda* Acacia! Daughter! Don't you come down! Don't come down! I am coming up

[*RAIMUNDA, FIDELA, ENGRACIA, and a number of other women enter*]

*Acacia* What's the matter? What has happened? Some one is dead, isn't he? Some one is dead?

*Raimunda* My poor child! Faustino! Faustino!

*Acacia* What?

*Raimunda* Murdered! Shot dead as he left the village!

*Acacia* Mother! Ay! But who did it? Who did it?

*Raimunda* Nobody knows It was too dark, they couldn't see Every one thinks it was Norbert—so as to fill the cup of disgrace which we must drain in this house!

*Engracia* It couldn't have been any one else

*Women* It was Norbert! It was Norbert!

*Fidela* Here come the constables

*Engracia* Have they caught him?

*Raimunda* And here is your father

[*ESTEBAN enters*] Esteban, my soul! Who did it? Do you know?

*Esteban* How do I know? I saw what the rest did. Don't leave the house, do you hear? I don't want to have you running around the village.

*Raimunda* But how is his father? Think of his poor mother when they carry her boy home to her dead—murdered! And he left her alive, happy, and well only this morning!

*Engracia* Hanging is too good for the wretch that did it!

*Fidela* They ought to have killed him on the spot! Such a thing never happened before in this village.

*Raimunda* Esteban, don't let them take the body away. I must see him—and so must my daughter. He was to have been her husband.

*Esteban* Keep cool! There is plenty of time. I don't want you to leave the house, do you hear? It's in the hands of the law now, the doctor and priest were too late. I must hurry back, we all have depositions to make. [*He retires*]

*Raimunda* Your father is right. What can we do?—except commend his soul to God, who was his Maker. I can't get his poor mother out of my head! Don't take it so hard, Acacia. It frightens me to see you so still. It is worse than if you cried your heart out. Who would ever have believed this morning that such a thing could be? But it is! A curse has fallen upon us!

*Engracia* The shot went straight through his heart.

*Fidela* He fell off his horse, like a log.

*Raimunda* What a shame, what a disgrace to the village! I blush to think that the murderer was born in this place, that he was one of us, and walked about here with all that evil in his heart! He is one of our own family, to make it worse!

*Gaspara* But we aren't sure of that.

*Raimunda* Who else could it be? Everybody says so.

*Engracia* Everybody says it was Norbert.

*Fidela* It couldn't have been any one but Norbert!

*Raimunda* Light the candles, Milagros, before the image of the Virgin. Let us tell her a rosary, since we can do no more than pray for the dead.

*Gaspara* God rest his soul!

*Engracia* He died without confession.

*Fidela* From Purgatory, good Lord, deliver us.

*All* God rest his soul!

*Raimunda* [*To MILAGROS*] You begin the rosary, I cannot pray. I am thinking of his mother's broken heart!

[*The women begin to tell the rosary*]

## ACT TWO

*Entrance hall of a farmhouse* There is a large door at the rear, on either side of which is a window, having an iron grating. A door on the left, and another on the right.

*ESTEBAN is seated at a small table, taking lunch. RAIMUNDA waits upon him, seated also. JULIANA comes and goes, assisting with the service. ACACIA sits in a low chair near one of the windows, sewing. A basket of clothes stands beside her.*

*Raimunda* Don't you like it?

*Esteban* Of course I do.

*Raimunda* You haven't eaten anything. Do you want us to cook something else?

*Esteban* Don't bother me, my dear. I have had plenty.

*Raimunda* You don't expect me to believe that. [*Calling*] Juliana! Bring the salad!—Something is the matter with you.

*Esteban* Don't be silly.

*Raimunda* Don't you suppose that I know you by this time? You ought never to have gone to the village. You've heard talk. We came out here to the grove to get rid of it all, to be away from the excitement, and it was a good thing, too, that we did. Now you go back to the village and don't say one word to me about it. What did you want to do that for?

*Esteban* I wanted to see Norbert and his father.

*Raimunda* Yes, but you could have sent for them and have had them come out here. You ought to have spared yourself, then you wouldn't have heard all this talk. I know how they are talking in the village.

*Juliana* Yes, and that is all the good it does us to stay out here and shut ourselves up from everybody, because everybody that goes anywhere in the neighborhood passes through this grove, and then they stop, and smell around, and meddle in what is none of their business.

*Esteban* Yes, and you meddle with every one of them

*Juliana* No, señor, don't you make any mistake I meddle with nobody Didn't I scold Bernabea only yesterday for talking more than she had any right to with some men from Encinar who were coming down the road? If any one asks questions send them to me, because I've learned what to do from my mother, who had good reason to know When questioned much, answer little, and be sure you make it just the opposite

*Raimunda* Hold your tongue! And get out [*JULIANA retires*] What do they say in the village?

*Esteban* Nothing Tío Eusebio and his boys swear they are going to kill Norbert They refuse to accept the decision of the court, he got off too easily They are coming over some day, and then there will be trouble You hear both sides in the village Some think that Tío Eusebio is right, that it must have been Norbert, others think it wasn't Norbert They say that the court let him go because he was innocent, and he proved it

*Raimunda* That is what I think No one could contradict his deposition, not even Faustino's father could find any flaws in it, nor the hands You couldn't yourself, and you were with them

*Esteban* Tío Eusebio and I had stopped to light our cigars We were laughing like two fools because I had my lighter, and it wouldn't light, so Tío Eusebio got out his tinder and flint and said to me, laughing "Here, get a light, and don't waste your time with that new-fangled machine All it is good for is to help fools waste their money I still make out with this" That was what blinded us We were fooling over the light when the shot was fired We started up and could see nothing Then, when we saw that he had dropped dead, we stood stock-still, as dead as he was They could have finished us, too, while they were about it, and we would never have known it

[*ACACIA gets up suddenly and starts to go out*]

*Raimunda* Where are you going, my dear? Don't be nervous

*Acacia* You never talk about anything else I don't see how you can stand it Hasn't he told us how it happened over and over again? Do we have to hear the same thing all the time?

*Esteban* She is right If I had my way, I'd never mention it again, it's your mother

*Acacia* I even dream about it at night I never used to be nervous when I was alone or in the dark, but now I am frightened to death, even in broad daylight

*Raimunda* You are not the only one, either I get no rest, day nor night I never used to be afraid I thought nothing of passing the cemetery after dark, not even on All Soul's Eve, but now the least thing makes me jump, no matter what—noise, silence To tell the truth, as long as we thought it was Norbert, although he was one of the family, and it would have been a shame and a disgrace to us all, at the same time it couldn't be helped, there was nothing to do but resign oneself—and I had resigned myself After all, it had an explanation But now, if it wasn't Norbert, if nobody knows who it was, and nobody can explain why it was that that poor boy was shot—I can't be easy in my mind If it wasn't Norbert, who could have wished him any harm? Maybe it was revenge, some enemy of his father's, or of yours—how do we know but that the shot was intended for you, and since it was night and pitch-dark, they made a mistake, and what they didn't do then they will another time, and

I can't stand this suspense! I get no rest! Every time that you go out of the house and show yourself on the road, it seems to me that I will go crazy To-day, when you were late, I was just starting for the village myself

*Acacia* She was out on the road already

*Raimunda* Yes, only I saw you and Rubio from the top of the hill, so I turned and ran back before you passed the mill, so you wouldn't be angry I know it is foolish, but now I want to be with you all the time, wherever you go—I can't bear to be separated from you for one moment Otherwise I can't be happy This isn't living

*Esteban* I don't believe anybody wishes me any harm I never wronged any man I go wherever I please, without so much as giving it a thought, day or night

*Raimunda* I used to feel the same, there is nobody who could wish us harm We have helped so many But all that you need is one enemy, one envious, evil mind How do we know but that we have some enemy without our suspecting it? A second shot might come from the same quarter as the first Norbert

is free because they couldn't prove that he was guilty, and I am glad of it. Why shouldn't I be glad when he is my own sister's son—my favorite sister's? I could never have believed that Norbert could have done such a thing as murder a man in the dark! But is this to be the end of it? What is the law doing now? Why don't they investigate, why doesn't some one speak? Somebody must know, somebody must have seen whoever it was that was there that day, hovering along the road. When everything is all right, everybody knows who is passing, and what is going on—who comes and who goes—you hear it all without asking, but when you want to know, then nobody knows, nobody has seen anything.

*Esteban* I can't see why that is so strange. When a man is going about his business, he has nothing to conceal, but when his intentions are evil, naturally the first thing he does is to hide himself.

*Raimunda* Who do you think that it was?

*Esteban* I? To tell the truth, I thought it was Norbert, the same as you. If it wasn't Norbert, I don't know who it was.

*Raimunda* I suppose you won't like it, but I'll tell you what I have made up my mind to do.

*Esteban* What?

*Raimunda* Talk to Norbert. Bernabé has gone to find him. I expect him any minute.

*Acacia* Norbert? What do you want to talk to him for?

*Esteban* That is what I say. What does he know about it?

*Raimunda* How can I tell? But I know he won't lie to me. By the memory of his mother, I will make him tell me the truth. If he did it, he knows I will never tell. I can't stand this any longer. I shake all over.

*Esteban* Do you suppose that Norbert is going to tell you if he was the one who did it?

*Raimunda* After I talk to him I shall know.

*Esteban* Well, have your own way. It will only make more talk and hard feeling, especially since Tío Eusebio is coming over to-day. If they meet.

*Raimunda* They won't meet on the road, because they come from different directions. After they are here the house is big enough. We can take care of them both.

[JULIANA enters.]

*Juhana* Master

*Esteban* Why are you always bothering me?

*Juhana* Tío Eusebio is coming down the road. Maybe you don't want to see him, I thought you might like to know.

*Esteban* Why shouldn't I want to see him? Didn't I tell you he was coming?—Now bring in the other one!

*Raimunda* Yes, he can't come too soon to please me.

*Esteban* Who told you that I didn't want to see Tío Eusebio?

*Juhana* Oh, don't blame it on me! It wasn't my fault. Rubio says you don't want to see him because he is mad at you. You didn't side with him in court, and that's the reason that Norbert went free.

*Esteban* I'll teach Rubio it's none of his business whom I side with.

*Juhana* Yes, and there are other things you might teach him while you are about it. Have I nothing to do but wait on that man? God help me, he has had more to drink to-day than is good for him. And that isn't talk, either.

*Raimunda* This is the last straw! Where is he?

*Esteban* No, leave him to me.

*Raimunda* Everything goes wrong in this house. Everybody takes advantage of you as soon as anything is the matter. You don't need to turn your back—it's instinct. They know when you can't take care of yourself.

*Juhana* I'll not take that from you, Raimunda, if you mean me.

*Raimunda* You know who I mean. Take it any way you like.

*Juhana* Señor, señor! What curse has fallen on this house? We are all poisoned, snared, our feet are caught in some evil vine, we are changed. One takes it out on the other, and everybody is against me. God help me, I say, and give me the strength to endure it!

*Raimunda* Yes, and give me the strength to endure you.

*Juhana* Yes, me! It is all my fault.

*Raimunda* Look at me, will you? Do I have to tell you to your face to get out? That's all I want from you.

*Juhana* Yes, you want me to shut up like a tomb. Well, I'll shut up, God help me! Señor! Let me out! Don't talk to me! [Goes out.]

*Esteban* Here comes Tío Eusebio.

*Acacia* I am going. He breaks down and cries whenever he sees me. He doesn't know what he is doing, but it's always the wrong thing. Does he think he is the only one who has lost anything?

*Raimunda* I am sure I have cried as much as his mother has. Tío Eusebio is not the same man, he forgets. But never mind. You are right not to see him.

*Acacia* I have finished the shirts, mother. I'll iron them as soon as I have time.

*Esteban* Were you sewing for me?

*Acacia* You can see for yourself.

*Raimunda* I don't know how we'd get on if she didn't sew. I am not good for anything. I don't know whether I am alive or dead, God help me! But she can work. She gets through with it somehow. [*She caresses ACACIA affectionately as she passes out*] God bless you, Acacia, my child! [*ACACIA goes out*] It is a terrible responsibility to be a mother. For a long time I was afraid that she was going to get married and leave me. Now, what wouldn't I give to see her married?

[*Tío EUSEBIO enters*]

*Eusebio* Hello! Where is everybody?

*Esteban* Come in, Tío Eusebio.

*Eusebio* Good morning to both.

*Raimunda* Good morning, Tío Eusebio.

*Esteban* Where are your horses? I'll have them put up.

*Eusebio* My man will tend to that.

*Esteban* Sit down. Come, a glass of that wine he likes so much, Raimunda.

*Eusebio* No, no, thank you. I am not feeling well. Wine doesn't agree with me.

*Esteban* This wine will do you good. It's a tonic.

*Raimunda* Suit yourself. How are you, Tío Eusebio? How is Julia?

*Eusebio* Julia? What do you expect? I am going to lose her just as I did the boy, I can see it.

*Raimunda* God forbid! Hasn't she four sons yet to live for?

*Eusebio* Yes, the more worry! That is what is killing her—worry. Nobody knows what will happen next. Our hearts are broken. We were sure that we would get justice, but now we are bitter. Everybody said it would be like this, but we didn't believe it. The murderer is alive—you pass him on the street, he goes home to his house, shuts the door, and laughs at us. It only proves what I knew all the time. There is no such thing in this

world as justice, unless a man takes it with his own hands, which is what they will drive us to do now. That is why I wanted to see you yesterday. If my boys come into the village, send them home. Don't let them stay around. Arrest them—anything rather than another tragedy in our house, although I don't want to see his murderer go free—the murderer of my boy—unless God avenges him, as he must, by God!—or else there is no justice in heaven.

*Raimunda* Don't turn against God, Tío Eusebio. Though the hand of justice never fall upon him after the foul murder he has done, yet there is not one of us that would be in his place. He is alone with his conscience. I would not have what he has on his soul upon mine, for all the blessings of this world. We have lived good lives, we have done evil to no man, yet all our days are purgatory and torment. He must have hell in his heart after what he has done—of that we can be sure—as sure as of the day of our death.

*Eusebio* That is cold comfort to me. How does it help me prevent my boys from taking the law into their own hands? Justice has not been done—and it should have been done. Now they are the ones who will go to jail for it! They will make good their threats too. You ought to hear them. Even the little fellow, who is only twelve, doubles up his fists like a man, and swears that whoever killed his brother will have to reckon with him, come what may. I sit there and cry like a child. I needn't tell you how his mother feels. And all the while I have it in my heart to say: Go, my sons! Stone him until he is dead! Cut him to pieces like a hound! Drag his carcass home to me through the mire—what offal there is left of it! Instead I swallow it all and look grave, and tell them that it is wrong even to think of such a thing—it would kill their mother, it would ruin all of us!

*Raimunda* You are unreasonable, Tío Eusebio. Norbert is innocent, the law says so. No one could bring the least proof against him, he proved where he was, and what he was doing all that day, one hour after the other. He and his men were up at Los Berrocales. Don Faustino, the doctor, saw him there and talked with him at the very hour it took place, and he is from Eñicinar. You know yourself no man can be in two places at the same time. You might think that his



own people had been told to say what they did, although it isn't an easy thing for so many to agree on a lie, but Don Faustino is a friend of yours, he is in your debt. And others who would naturally have been on your side said the same. Only one shepherd from Los Berrocales would testify that he had seen a man at that hour, and that was a great way off, but he had no idea who it was. From his clothes and the way that he carried himself he was sure that it could not have been Norbert.

*Eusebio* If it wasn't, I say nothing. Does it make it any better for us that he hired some one else to do it? There can't be any doubt, there is no other explanation. I have no enemies who would do such a thing. I never harmed any man, I help every one, whether they are our own people or not. I make it easy. If I were to sue for one-half the damage that is done me every day, it would take all of my time. I will die a poor man. They killed Faustino because he was going to marry Acacia. That is all there is to it. Nobody could have had any such reason but Norbert. If everybody had told what they knew, the trial would have ended right there. But the ones who knew most said the least, they said nothing.

*Raimunda* Do you mean us?

*Eusebio* I don't say who I mean.

*Raimunda* It is plain enough, you don't have to mention names nor point your finger. Do you mean to say that we keep quiet because Norbert is one of our family?

*Eusebio* Do you mean to say that Acacia doesn't know more about this thing than she is willing to admit?

*Raimunda* No, sir, she knows no more about it than you do. You have made up your mind that it was Norbert because you want to make yourself believe that nobody else has anything against you. We are none of us saints, Tío Eusebio. You may have done a great deal of good in your time, but you must also have done some evil, you think that nobody remembers, but maybe the ones who have suffered don't think the same. If Norbert had been in love with my daughter to that extent, he would have shown it before now. Your son didn't take her away from him, remember that Faustino never said one word until after she was done with Norbert, and she turned him off because she knew he was going with

another girl. He never so much as took the trouble to excuse himself, so that when you come down to it, he was the one who left her. That is no reason why any one should commit murder. You can see it yourself.

*Eusebio* Then why did everybody say that it couldn't have been any one else? You said so yourself, everybody said so.

*Raimunda* Yes, because at first he was the only one we could think of. But when you look at it calmly, it is foolish to say that he is the only one who could have done it. You insinuate that we have something to conceal. Once for all, let me tell you, we are more anxious than you are to have the truth known, to have this thing out and be done with it. You have lost a son, but I have a daughter who is alive, and she has nothing to gain, either, by this mystery.

*Eusebio* No, she hasn't. Much less when she keeps her mouth shut. And you haven't anything to gain. You don't know what Norbert and his father say about this house so as to divert suspicion from themselves? If I believed what they said.

*Raimunda* About us? What do they say? [To ESTEBAN] You have been in the village. What do they say?

*Esteban* Nobody cares what they say.

*Eusebio* No, I don't believe one word that comes from them. I am only telling you how they repay the kindness you do them by taking their part.

*Raimunda* So you are on that tack again? Tío Eusebio, I have to stop and force myself to think what it must mean to lose a child, or I would lose control of myself. I am a mother, God knows, yet you come here and insult my daughter. You insult all of us.

*Esteban* Wife! Enough of this. What is the use? Tío Eusebio.

*Eusebio* I insult nobody. I only repeat what other people say. You suppress the truth because he is one of the family. The whole village is the same. What you are afraid of is the disgrace. People here may think that it was not Norbert, but in Encinar, let me tell you, they think that it was. If justice isn't done—and done quick—blood will be spilled between these villages, and nobody can stop it, either. You know what young blood is.

*Raimunda* Yes, and you are the one who stirs it up. You respect neither God nor man.



Why, didn't you just admit that Norbert couldn't have done it unless he had hired some one to commit the murder? Nonsense! It isn't so easy to hire a man to commit murder. What had a boy like Norbert to give, anyway?—Unless you want us to believe that his father had a hand in it.

*Eusebio* Bah! Rogues come cheap. How about the Valderribles? They live here. Didn't they kill two gouthoids for three and a half duros?

*Raimunda* How long was it before they were found out? They fought over the half duro. When you hire a man to do a deed like that, you put yourself in his power; you become his slave for the rest of your life. There may be people who can afford to do such things, but they must be rich, they must have power. Not a boy like Norbert!

*Eusebio* Every family has a faithful servant who will do what he is told.

*Raimunda* No doubt yours has. No doubt you have had occasion to use him too; you know so much about it.

*Eusebio* Take care what you say!

*Raimunda* Take care yourself!

*Esteban* Raimunda! Enough of this. What is the use of all this talk?

*Eusebio* Well, you hear what she says. How about you?

*Esteban* If we dwell on this forever, we shall all of us go mad.

*Eusebio* Yes. You heard what I said.

*Raimunda* If you mean by that you don't intend to let this matter drop until you have found the murderer of your boy, it is only right and proper, and I respect you for it. But that is no reason why you should come here and insult us. Once for all, you may want justice, but I want it more than you do. I pray to God for it every day, I pray him on my knees not to let the murderer go free—and I should pray to him just the same if I had a boy—it it had been my own boy that did it! [*Rubio appears in the doorway*]

*Rubio* How about me, master?

*Esteban* Well, Rubio?

*Rubio* Don't look at me like that; I'm not drunk. We started out before lunch, that was all. I had an invitation and took a drop; it went against me. I'm sorry you feel that way about it.

*Raimunda* What is the matter with him? Juliana was right.

*Rubio* Tell Juliana to mind her business, will you? I just wanted to tell the master.

*Esteban* Rubio! You can tell me later whatever you like. Tio Eusebio is here. Don't you see? We are busy.

*Rubio* Tio Eusebio! So he is. What does he want?

*Raimunda* Is it any of your business what he wants? Get out! Go along and sleep it off. You don't know what you are talking about.

*Rubio* I know, señora. Don't say that to me.

*Esteban* Rubio!

*Rubio* Juliana's a fool; I don't drink. It was my money, anyhow. I'm no thief. What I have is my own; and my wife is my own too. She owes nobody anything, eh, master?

*Esteban* Rubio! Go along! Get to bed, and don't show yourself again until you have had a good sleep. What is the matter with you? What will Tio Eusebio think?

*Rubio* I don't know. I don't take anything, understand—from anybody. [*Goes out*]

*Raimunda* What was it that you were just saying about servants. Tio Eusebio? This man has us with our hearts in our throats, yet he is nothing to us. Suppose we had trusted him with some secret? What is the matter with Rubio anyway? Is he going to get drunk every day? He was never like this before. You ought not to put up with it.

*Esteban* Don't you see? He isn't used to it. That is the reason he is upset by a thimbleful. Somebody invited him into the tavern while I was tending to my business. I gave him a piece of my mind and sent him to bed, but he hasn't slept it off yet. He is drunk. That is all there is to it.

*Eusebio* Perfectly natural. Is that all?

*Esteban* Drop in again, Tio Eusebio.

*Eusebio* Thanks. I am sorry this happened—after I took the trouble to come.

*Raimunda* Nonsense! Nothing has happened. We have no hard feeling.

*Eusebio* No, and I hope you won't have any. Remember what I've been through. My heart is broken—it's not scratched. It won't heal either until God clums another one of his own. How long do you expect to stay in the grove?

*Esteban* Till Sunday. We have nothing to keep us. We only wanted to be out of the village. Now that Norbert is home, it is nothing but talk, talk, talk.

*Eusebio* That's right—nothing but talk.

If you see my boys around, look out! I don't want them to get into any trouble, which afterward we might have cause to regret

*Esteban* Don't you worry They won't get into any while I am around Blame it on me if they do

*Eusebio* They're working down by the river now They'll be all right unless somebody happens along and stars them up God be with you, I say Adios! Where is Acacia?

*Raimunda* I told her not to come down, so as to spare your feelings It is hard on her, too, it brings back everything

*Eusebio* That's so It must

*Esteban* I'll send for your horses

*Eusebio* No, I can call myself —Francisco! —Here he comes Take care of yourselves God be with you!

[*They move toward the door*]

*Raimunda* God be with you, Tío Eusebio Tell Julia not to worry I think of her every day I have prayed more for her than I have for the boy—God has forgiven him by this time Surely he never did anything to deserve such a bad end! My heart bleeds for him..

[*ESTEBAN and Tío EUSEBIO have passed out while she is speaking BERNABÉ enters*]

*Bernabé* Señora!

*Raimunda* Is Norbert here? Could you find him?

*Bernabé* Yes, I brought him along so as to save time He wanted to see you himself

*Raimunda* Didn't you meet Tío Eusebio?

*Bernabé* No, we saw him coming up from the river when we were a long way off, so we turned and went in by the great corral Norbert is hiding there until Tío Eusebio starts back to Encinar

*Raimunda* There he goes up the road now

*Bernabé* Yes—under the great cross

*Raimunda* Tell Norbert No—wait! What do they say in the village?

*Bernabé* No good, señora The law is going to have its hands full before it gets to the bottom of this

*Raimunda* Does anybody think it was Norbert?

*Bernabé* You would get your head broke if you said it was When he came back yesterday, half the town was out to meet him. Everybody was sitting by the roadside They took him up on their shoulders and carried him home The women all cried, and the

men hugged him I thought his father would die for joy

*Raimunda* He never did it Poor Norbert!

*Bernabé* They say the men are coming over from Encinar to kill him, everybody here carries a club and goes armed

*Raimunda* Mother of God! Did anything go wrong with the master while he was in the village this morning? What did you hear?

*Bernabé* So they have been talking to you?

*Raimunda* No That is—yes, I know

*Bernabé* Rubio was in the tavern and began to say things, so I ran for the master, and he came and ordered him out He was insolent to the master He was drunk

*Raimunda* Do you remember what he said? I mean Rubio

*Bernabé* Oh! His tongue ran away with him He was drunk Do you know what I think? If I were you, I wouldn't go back to the village for two or three days

*Raimunda* No, certainly not If I had my way we would never go back I am filled with a loathing for it all so great that I want to rush out, and down that long road, and then on and up over those mountains to the other side, and after that I don't know where I would hide myself I feel as if some one were running after me, after me, always after me, with more than death in his heart But the master Where is the master?

*Bernabé* Seeing to Rubio

*Raimunda* Tell Norbert to come in I can't wait

[*BERNABÉ goes out NORBERT enters*]

*Norbert* Aunt Raimunda!

*Raimunda* Norbert, my boy! Give me a hug

*Norbert* I am so glad you sent for me I've been treated like a dog It's a good thing that my mother is dead and in heaven I am glad she never lived to see this day Next to my father, there is nobody in the world I think so much of as I do of you

*Raimunda* I could never have believed that you did it—not though everybody said so

*Norbert* I know it, you were the first to take my part Where is Acacia?

*Raimunda* In her room We have our fill of trouble in this house

*Norbert* Who says I killed Faustino? If I hadn't proved, as I did prove, where I was all that day, if I'd done as I meant at first and taken my gun and gone off to hunt alone

by myself, and then couldn't have proved where I was, because nobody had seen me, I would have spent the rest of my life in prison. They would have had me.

*Rarmunda* Are you crying?

*Norbert* No, I am not crying, but I cried when I found myself in that prison. If anybody had ever told me that I would ever go to prison, I would never have believed it, I'd have laughed in his face. But that isn't the worst. Tío Eusebio and his boys have sworn to kill me. They will never believe that I am innocent; they know I murdered Faustino. They are as sure of it as I am that my mother lies under the ground!

*Rarmunda* Because nobody knows who did it. Nobody can find out anything. Don't you see? They will never rest at that. Do you suspect any one?

*Norbert* I more than suspect.

*Rarmunda* Then why didn't you say so? You were in court. You had the opportunity.

*Norbert* If I hadn't cleared myself I would have told. But what was the use? I am a dead man now if I speak. They will do the same thing to me.

*Rarmunda* Eh? Will they? What do you mean? Was it revenge? But who did it? Tell me what you think. I must know, because Tío Eusebio and Esteban have always had the same friends, they have always stood together, for better or for worse, whichever it was. Their enemies would naturally be the same. No, I can get no rest. This vengeance was intended for us just as much as it was for Tío Eusebio, it was to prevent a closer union of our families. Maybe they won't stop at that, either. Some day they will do the same to my husband!

*Norbert* I wouldn't worry about Uncle Esteban.

*Rarmunda* Why, what do you mean? Do you think?

*Norbert* I don't think.

*Rarmunda* Then tell me what you know. Somehow I believe you are not the only one who knows it. You think what the rest think—it must be the same—what everybody knows.

*Norbert* Well, they didn't get it out of me; that is one thing you can be sure of. Besides, how could they know? It's gossip, that's all—not worth that! Talk in the village! They will never get it out of me.

*Rarmunda* Norbert, by the soul of your sainted mother in heaven, tell me what it is!

*Norbert* For God's sake, I can't talk! I was afraid to open my mouth in court. Now, if I say a word, I am a dead man. A dead man!

*Rarmunda* But who would kill you?

*Norbert* Who killed Faustino?

*Rarmunda* But who did kill Faustino? Some one was paid to do it, is that it? Rubio said something in the wine-shop this morning.

*Norbert* Who told you?

*Rarmunda* Esteban went in and dragged him out, it was the only way he could stop him.

*Norbert*. He didn't want to be compromised.

*Rarmunda* What is that? He didn't want to be compromised? Was Rubio saying that he

*Norbert* That he was the real master of this house.

*Rarmunda* The master of this house? Because it was Rubio.

*Norbert* Rubio.

*Rarmunda* Who killed Faustino?

*Norbert* *Si, señora*

*Rarmunda* Rubio! I knew it all the time. But does anybody else know? That is the question. Do they know it in the village?

*Norbert* He gives himself away, he has money—bills, bank-notes—wherever he goes. He turned on them this morning while they were singing that song. That was why they had to call Uncle Esteban, and he kicked him out of the wine-shop.

*Rarmunda* That song? Oh, yes! That song—I remember. It goes . . . How does it go?

*Norbert*

"Who loves the maid that dwells by the Mill  
Shall love in evil hour,

Because she loves with the love that she  
loves,

Call her the Passion Flower"

*Rarmunda* We are the ones who dwell by the Mill, that is what they call us. It is here—our house. And the maid that dwells by the Mill must be Acacia, my daughter. This song that everybody sings. They call her the Passion Flower? That is it, isn't it? But who loves her in an evil way? How could anybody love her? You loved her, Faustino loved her, but who else ever

loved her? Why do they call her the Passion Flower? Look me in the eye! Why did you give her up if you really loved her? Why? I want you to tell me, you have got to tell me. You cannot tell me anything worse than what I already know.

*Norbert* Do you want them to kill me? To run all of us? I have never said one word—not even when they had me in prison would I say one word! I don't know how it got out—Rubio told, or my father. He is the only one who ever had it from me. He wanted to put the law on them, but I said no. They would have killed him, they would have killed me!

*Raimunda* Stop! Don't you talk! I see it now. I see it all. The Passion Flower! *La Malquerida*! Come here to me! Tell me everything. Before they kill you, by God, they will have to kill me! It cannot go on like this. Somebody must pay for it. Tio Eusebio and his boys will never rest till they have justice. If they can't get it in any other way, they will take it out of you—revenge! You can't escape. Faustino was murdered so as to prevent him from marrying Acacia. You left her for the same reason—for fear that they would kill you. Was that it? Tell me the truth!

*Norbert* They told me to leave her because she was promised to Faustino, she had been for a long time. They said they had an understanding with Tio Eusebio, and if I didn't make the best of it, then I could take the worst of it. But if I ever opened my mouth.

*Raimunda* They would kill you? Was that it? But you.

*Norbert* I believed it—I was afraid—I didn't know what to do. Then I began to run after another girl, who was nothing to me, so as to break off with Acacia. Afterward, when I found out that not a word of it was true, that neither Tio Eusebio nor Faustino had ever spoken to Uncle Esteban.

Then, when they killed Faustino I knew why they killed him. It was because he dared lay eyes on Acacia. There was nothing they could tell him. They couldn't scare him off. Tio Eusebio wasn't a man to stand by and see his son refused. They couldn't refuse, so they agreed to it, and went through with it until the end came, and they killed him. They killed him because I was here to take the blame. Who else could have done it? Of course it was I! I loved Acacia—I was

jealous. That was the plot. Praise God, some saint surely watched over me that day! But now the crime has come home to him. It lies like lead on his conscience. He betrays himself.

*Raimunda* Is it possible that such a thing could be? I must have been blind not to see. What veil hung over my eyes? Why, it is all as clear as day! How could I have been so blind?

*Norbert* What are you doing?

*Raimunda* I don't know—I don't know where I am—something so awful, so vast is passing through my mind that it seems as if it were nothing. I can only remember one thing of all that you have told me—that song—*La Malquerida*! The Passion Flower! I want you to teach me the music. We can sing it together, and dance—dance and drop dead!—Acacia! Acacia! Acacia!

*Norbert* No, don't you call her! Don't take it like this! It wasn't her fault!

[ACACIA enters]

*Acacia* Did you call, mother?—Norbert!

*Raimunda* Come here! Look at me—straight in the eye.

*Acacia* What is the matter with you, mother?

*Raimunda* No, it was not your fault.

*Acacia* But what have they been doing? What did you tell her?

*Raimunda* What every one else knows already—*La Malquerida*! The Passion Flower! Your honor is a scorn and a byword. It is bandied about in men's mouths!

*Acacia* My honor? Never! No one can say that.

*Raimunda* Don't you deny it! Tell me what you know. Why was it that you never called him father? Why was it?

*Acacia* Because a child has only one father, you know that. This man could never be my father. I hated, I despised him from the day that he entered this house, and brought hell along after him!

*Raimunda* Well, you are going to call him now, and you are going to call him what I tell you, you are going to call him father. Do you hear? Your father! I tell you to call your father.

*Acacia* Do you want me to go to the cemetery and call him? If that isn't what you want, I have no father. This man—this man is your husband, you love him, but all that he is to me is this man! This man!

That is all he can ever be! Leave me alone if you know what is good for you—you think you are so smart. Let the law take its course. I don't care. If he has sinned, he can pay for it.

*Raimunda* Do you mean for Faustino's murder? Yes—go on! Go on! What else? Out with it!

*Acacia* No, mother, no! For if I had consented, Faustino would never have been murdered! Do you think I don't know how to guard my honor?

*Raimunda* Then what have you been so silent about? Why didn't you come to me?

*Acacia* Would you have taken my word against this man, when you were mad for him? And you must have been mad not to see! He would eat me up with his eyes while you sat there, he followed me around the house like a cat. What more do you want? I hated him so, I had such a horror of him that I prayed to God that he would make himself even more of a beast than he was, so that it would open your eyes, if anything could have opened your eyes, and let you see what manner of man he was who had robbed me of your love, for you have loved him, you have loved him so much—more than you ever loved my father!

*Raimunda* No! That isn't true!

*Acacia* I wanted you to hate him as I hate him, as my father in heaven hates him! I have heard his voice from the skies.

*Raimunda* Silence! For shame! Come here to your mother. You are all that I have left in the world. And thank God that I can still protect you! [BERNABÉ enters]

*Bernabé* Señora! Señora!

*Raimunda* What brings you running in such a hurry? No good, we may be sure.

*Bernabé* Don't let Norbert leave the house! Don't let him out of your sight!

*Raimunda* How?

*Bernabé* Tío Eusebio's boys are waiting outside with their men to kill him.

*Norbert* What did I tell you? You wouldn't believe it. They are here—they want to kill me! And they will kill me. Yes, they will!

*Raimunda* Not unless they kill us all first! Somebody has sent for them.

*Bernabé* Yes, Rubio. I saw him running along the river bank where Tío Eusebio's boys were at work.

*Norbert* Didn't I tell you? They want to kill me, so as to save themselves. Then nothing

will ever come out. Tío Eusebio's boys will think they have the man who murdered their brother. They will kill me, Aunt Raimunda! Yes, they will! They are too many for one, I can't defend myself. I haven't even a knife. I don't dare to carry a gun—I might kill some one. I'd rather die than be locked up in that cell again. Save me, Aunt Raimunda! I don't want to die. It wasn't my fault! They hunt me like a wolf.

*Raimunda* Don't be afraid. If they kill you, it will be over my dead body. Go in there with Bernabé and take that gun, do you hear? They won't dare to come in. If they do, shoot to kill! When I call, shoot—no matter who it may be! Do you understand? No matter who it may be! Don't shut the door. [To ACACIA] You stand here by me. Esteban! Esteban! Esteban!

*Acacia* What are you going to do?

[ESTEBAN enters]

*Esteban* Did you call?

*Raimunda* Yes, I want to speak to you. Norbert is here in our house. Tío Eusebio's boys are waiting outside. You sent for them to kill him—because you are not man enough to do it yourself.

*Esteban* [Making a movement to draw a weapon] Raimunda!

*Acacia* Mother!

*Raimunda* No, don't you do it! Call Rubio and let him make an end of us all! He will have to make an end of us all to cover your guilt. Murderer! Assassin!

*Esteban* You are crazy!

*Raimunda* I was crazy! I was crazy the day that you first entered this house—my house—like a thief, to rob me of all I held dear!

*Esteban* What are you talking about?

*Raimunda* I am not talking, other people are talking. Soon the law will speak. If you don't want that, do as I tell you, or I will cry out—I will rouse the house. You brought them here—take them away again, you cowards that lie in wait for innocent men, to stab them in the back! Norbert leaves this house, but he leaves with me. If they kill him, they kill me. I am here to protect him, and I will protect my daughter—I, alone, against you, against all the assassins you can hire! Go! Here come my people. Don't you touch me! Hide yourself in the uttermost recesses of those mountains, in caves where the wild beasts dwell. Now I know! You

have nothing to hope for from me Oh, I was alone with my child!—and you came You knew that she was my child, there she stands—*La Malquerida!* The Passion Flower! Well! I am still here to guard her from you, to tell you that her father still lives in heaven—and to shoot you through the heart if you make one step to lay your hand on her!

### ACT THREE

*The scene is the same as in the Second Act RAIMUNDA stands at the door, peering anxiously out over the countryside After a moment JULIANA enters*

*Juhana* Raimunda!

*Raimunda* What do you want? Is he worse?

*Juhana* No, don't be nervous

*Raimunda* How is he? Why did you leave him?

*Juhana* He's asleep Acacia is with him, she can hear if he calls You are the one I am worried about Thank God, he's not dead Do you expect to go all day without eating?

*Raimunda* Let me alone, don't bother me

*Juhana* What are you doing out here? Come on in and sit with us

*Raimunda* I was looking for Bernabé

*Juhana* He can't be back so soon if he brings the men to take Norbert away If the constables come with him

*Raimunda* Constables? Constables in this house? Ah, Juhana, surely a curse has fallen upon us all!

*Juhana* Come on in, and don't be looking out of the door all the time It's not Bernabé that you are looking for, it's the other one—it's your husband When all is said and done, he is your husband

*Raimunda* Yes, the habits of a lifetime cannot be changed in one day Although I know what I know, and that it must always be so, although if I saw him coming it would be to curse him, although I must loathe him for the rest of my life, yet here I stand looking out of the door and scanning every rock and cranny upon those mountains only for a sight of him! It seems to me as if I were waiting for him as I used to do, to see him come happy and smiling, and then turn and walk into the house with him arm in arm like two lovers, and sit down here at the table to eat, and go over everything that we had done

during the day Sometimes we would laugh, sometimes we would argue, but always it was so dear, as if we had been fonder of each other than any one else who had ever lived in the world Now it is all over, nothing remains The peace of God has fled forever from this house!

*Juhana* You cannot believe what you see with your eyes If you hadn't told me yourself, if I didn't know how you felt, how you were, I would never have believed it Faustino is dead, God help him, we can leave it There might be more of the sort, too, for all I care, but this devil that has gotten into him with Acacia, it doesn't seem possible, I can't believe it—although I must believe it There is no other explanation of the mystery

*Raimunda* Did you ever notice anything?

*Juhana* Nothing When he first came to the house, it was to make love to you, and I needn't tell you how I felt I was fond of your first husband, there never was a better nor juster man in the world, so I looked on him with disfavor God have mercy on me, but if I had seen anything, what reason would I have had for keeping quiet? Of course, when you come to think, he gave her presents—and there were a good many of them, too—but we never thought anything of that She was so haughty with him They never had one good talk together from the day you were married She was only a runt then anyway She insulted him out of pure spite Nobody could do anything with her If you struck her, it made no difference I'll say this while I am about it if she had been nice to him when she was little, he might have looked on her as his own daughter Then we would never have been where we are now

*Raimunda* Are you trying to excuse him?

*Juhana* Excuse him? There can be no excuse for such a thing It was enough that she was your daughter What I say is that the girl was like a stranger to him from the beginning, although she was your own child If she had treated him like a father, as she ought—it would have been different, he isn't a bad man A bad man is bad through and through When you were first married, I've seen him sit by himself and cry at the way the girl ran from him, as if he had had the plague

*Raimunda* You are right The only trouble we ever had was with the child

*Juhana* After she was grown there wasn't

a girl in the village that was her equal for looks. Nobody knows that better than you do. But she shrank from him as if he had been the devil. There she was all the time—right before his eyes! No wonder if he had an evil thought, none of us are above them.

*Raimunda* I don't say he might not have had an evil thought, although he ought never to have had such a thought. But you put an evil thought out of your mind unless you are evil. He must have had more than an evil thought to do what he did, to murder a man in cold blood to prevent my daughter from marrying and going away—away from him, his mind must have been evil, like the criminal's, waiting to break out, with all the evil of the world in his heart. I am more anxious than anybody to believe that it is not so bad, but the more I think, the more I see that there can be no excuse for it. When I remember what has been hanging over my daughter all these years, that any moment—because a man who will do murder will do anything. If he had ever laid hands on her I would have killed them both, as sure as my name is Raimunda—him, because he had been guilty of such a crime, and her because she did not let him kill her before she would consent to it.

[BERNABÉ enters]

*Juhana* Here comes Bernabé.

*Raimunda* Are you alone?

*Bernabé* Yes, they are deciding in the village what is best to be done. I was afraid to stay any longer.

*Raimunda* You were right. This is not life. What do they say now?

*Bernabé* Do you want to go mad? Forget it. Pay no attention to what they say.

*Raimunda* Are they coming to take Norbert away?

*Bernabé* His father will tend to that. The doctor won't let them put him in the cart for fear it will make him worse. He'll have to be carried on a stretcher. The judge and the prosecutor are coming to take his story, so they don't want a relapse. He was unconscious yesterday and couldn't testify. Everybody has his own idea, no two agree. Not a soul went to the fields to-day. The men stand around the streets in groups, the women talk in the houses and run to and fro. Nobody stops to eat. Not a meal has been served to-day, dinner or supper either, on the hour.

*Raimunda* Didn't you tell them that Norbert's wounds aren't serious?

*Bernabé* What difference does that make? Now they can't do anything. Yesterday, when they thought Tío Eusebio's boys had fallen on him with the master, and he was going to die, the thing was simple, but to-day they hear he is better. How do they know but that he will soon be well again? Even Norbert's best friends say that it's a great pity that the wound wasn't serious. If he was wounded at all, it might better have been serious. Then Tío Eusebio's boys could have been made to pay for it, and they would have had their revenge, but now, if he gets well, the law will get into it, and then nobody will be satisfied.

*Juhana* They are so fond of Norbert, are they, that they wish he was dead? The idiots!

*Bernabé* That is the way they are. I told them they could thank you for it, because you were the one who called the master, and the master threw himself between them and knocked up their guns, so they couldn't kill him.

*Raimunda* Did you tell them that?

*Bernabé* Every mother's son that asked me. I said the first because it was true, and I said the rest—because you don't know what they are saying in the village, nor how they feel about what is going on in this house.

*Raimunda* No! I don't want to hear! Where is the master? Have you seen him? Do you know where he is?

*Bernabé* He and Rubio were up at Los Berrocales this morning with the goatherds from Encinar. They spent the night in a hut on the uplands. I don't like this going away. It's not right, if I know what is good for him. It looks as if he was afraid. This is no time to have people think what isn't so. Norbert's father talks too much. This morning he tried to persuade Tío Eusebio that his sons had no cause to shoot his boy.

*Raimunda* Is Tío Eusebio in the village?

*Bernabé* He came with his boys. They arrested them this morning, tied them together by the elbows, and brought them over from Encinar. Their father followed on foot and brought the little fellow with him, holding his hand all the way. They cried with every step that they took. There wasn't a man in the village but cried, too, when he saw them, even the strongest, no matter if he had never cried before.

*Raimunda* And his mother is alone at



home, and here I am! What do you men know? [ACACIA enters]

Acacia Mother—

Rarmunda Well? What is it?

Acacia Norbert wants you He is awake now He wants some water He is thirsty, I was afraid to give him any for fear it wasn't right

Rarmunda The doctor says he can have all the orange-juice he can drink Here's the jar Does he suffer much?

Acacia No, not now

Rarmunda [To BERNABÉ] Did you get the things for the doctor?

Bernabé Yes, they're in the saddle-bags I'll bring them in [Goes out]

Acacia He is calling, mother Do you hear?

Rarmunda Coming, Norbert, my boy [Goes out]

Acacia Has that man come back?

Juhana No He took his gun and rushed out like one mad as soon as it was over Rubio ran after him

Acacia Have they caught him?

Juhana You'll hear soon enough when they do They'll have to bring charges against him first

Acacia But doesn't everybody know? They heard what my mother said.

Juhana No, nobody heard except me and Bernabé, and he won't tell what isn't good for him, he is honest and loyal to this house They heard your mother shout, that was all They thought it was because Norbert was here, and Tío Eusebio's boys were waiting outside to kill him Nobody will say a word when the judge comes unless your mother tells us to open our mouths.

Acacia Do you mean that my mother isn't going to let you tell the truth? Won't she tell what she knows?

Juhana Is that what you want? So you want to disgrace this house, do you, and yourself? Then every man will think what he likes, some will believe that you are innocent, and some will never believe it A woman's honor is not a thing to be bandied about in men's mouths, not when it is none of their business

Acacia My honor? I can take care of my honor Let the others do the same Now I shan't marry I am glad it happened, because I shall never marry I only agreed to it to get rid of him

Juhana Acacia, I don't want to hear you—not another word Surely the devil must be in you!

Acacia Yes, he is, and he has always been, since I first learned to hate that man!

Juhana Yes, and who is to say that wasn't where the trouble began? You had no cause to hate him Mind you, nobody blamed your mother more than I did when she married again, but all the same, I saw what a devil you were to this man when you were a little child, and how much it meant to him—which you were too young to know

Acacia How much did it mean to me to see my mother always hanging around his neck? Do you suppose I liked it, sitting here and seeing her love him? I was always in the way

Juhana You have no right to talk like that You were always first with your mother, and you might have been with him

Acacia Might have been? Never! Because I was, and I am

Juhana But not like you mean, though you seem proud of it, in the way you should have been He never would have loved you as he did if you had loved him as a daughter

Acacia How could I love him? Didn't he turn me even against my own mother?

Juhana What do you mean? Turn you against your own mother?

Acacia Yes Do you suppose I can love her now as I ought, as I should have loved her if that man had never entered this house? I remember once when I was a little girl, I spent all one night with a knife under my pillow, and I lay awake all night The only thought that I had in my mind that night was to kill him

Juhana Jesús, my child! What is that? Suppose you had? Suppose you had gotten up, and had dared, and had killed him?

Acacia I don't know who I might have killed next

Juhana Holy Virgin! Jesús! Not another word Don't you talk! You are beyond the pale of God's mercy Do you know what I think? It was all your fault

Acacia All my fault?

Juhana Yes, yours! It was your fault! And I'll go further if you hated him as much as you say you do, then he would have been the only one you would have hated—yes, the only one! Jesús! It's a good thing that your mother doesn't know!



*Acacia* Know what?

*Juliana* That he wasn't the one you were jealous of. It was her! You were in love with him and you didn't know it.

*Acacia* In love with him?

*Juliana* Yes, hate turned to love. Nobody can hate like that. A hate like that always grows out of a great love.

*Acacia* Do you mean to say that I was in love with that man? Do you know what you are telling me?

*Juliana* I am not telling you anything.

*Acacia* No. What you will do now is run and tell my mother.

*Juliana* Is that what you are afraid of? I thought so. Now you are the one who is telling. You needn't worry, though. I'll not tell. She has enough on her mind, poor soul. God help us! [BERNABÉ enters]

*Bernabé* Here comes the master!

*Juliana* Did you see him?

*Bernabé* Yes. You wouldn't know him. He looks as if he had stepped from the grave.

*Acacia* Let me out!

*Juliana* Yes, let us all out—and shut your mouth, do you hear? What is done is done. Your mother must never know.

[The women go out]

[ESTEBAN and RUBIO enter, their guns over their shoulders]

*Bernabé* Can—can I do anything?

*Esteban* Nothing, Bernabé.

*Bernabé* I'll tell the mistress.

*Esteban* No, don't tell her, they'll find us.

*Rubio* How about his wounds, eh?

*Bernabé* Better. The doctor sent for these things. I'll take them in—unless you need me. [Goes out]

*Esteban* Here I am. What do you want me to do?

*Rubio* What do I want you to do? This is your house, you belong here. A man's house is his castle. Running away, being afraid to face it, is to confess. It will ruin us both.

*Esteban* Here I am, you have had your way. Now this woman will come and accuse me and raise the house. The judge will be here, and he will bring Tío Eusebio. What then?

*Rubio* Why didn't you let Tío Eusebio's boys handle it themselves? They would have finished it. Now he is only wounded. He will squeal, and so will his father, so will all the women. They are the ones I am afraid of.

They will talk. Nobody can prove who shot Faustino. You were with his father; nobody saw me. I have a good pair of legs. I was with some friends two leagues away a few minutes before, and I set the clock ahead. When I left the house I took good care to have them notice it.

*Esteban* Yes, we would have been safe if that had been all. But you talked, you gave yourself away.

*Rubio* You ought to have killed me. That was the first time in my life that I ever was afraid. I never expected they would let Norbert go. I told you that we ought to go into court and have Acacia testify that Norbert had sworn he was going to kill Faustino, but you wouldn't listen. Do you mean to tell me that you couldn't have made her do it? We could have got others, too, to say the same. Then it would have been easy, they would never have let him go. I know I made a fool of myself, but when I saw that Norbert was free, that the law—yes, and Tío Eusebio—would never stop there, that they would look somewhere else, then I was afraid for the first time. I wanted to forget. So I began to drink, which I never do, and I talked. You ought to have killed me then, you had ground for it. They were talking already in the village, that was what scared me. When I heard that song—it put the blame here. Norbert and his father suspect. After what happened before, they have their eyes open. That is the talk that has got to be stopped, no matter what comes of it. That is the danger—the crime will be known by the cause. Nothing else counts. So long as nobody knows why he was killed, nobody will ever find out who killed him either.

*Esteban* But why? Why was he killed? What was the use of killing anybody?

*Rubio*. I don't know. Don't ask me. Weren't you talking all the time? "If another man gets her, look out! Something happens." Then you told me she was going to be married. "I can't scare this one off, it's all over, he will take her away. I can't think." "Didn't you come to me in the morning early again and again, before it was light, and wake me up and say "Get up, Rubio, I haven't closed my eyes all night. I must get out. To the fields! I must walk!" And then we'd take our guns and go out and walk for hours, side by side, without speaking a word.

At last, when the fit has passed, and we'd put a few shots in the air so that nobody could say that we did no hunting when we went out to hunt, I'd tell you that we scared away the game, but you said we frightened evil thoughts and down we'd sit on some hummock and then you would burst out laughing like one mad, as if some weight had been lifted from your soul, and you'd catch me around the neck and talk, and talk, and talk—you didn't know how you talked, nor what you said, nor why, nor whether it had any sense at all, but it always came to the same thing "I am mad, crazy, a wild man! I cannot live like this I want to die I don't know what devil has gotten into me This is torment, hell!" And then you'd shuffle the words again, over and over, but it was always the same, you were dying—death! And you talked death so long that one day death heard—and he came And you know it

*Esteban* Stop! Why do you have to talk?

*Rubio* Take care, master! Don't you touch me! I know what was in your mind when we were coming down the mountain. Make no mistake You lagged behind Another minute and your gun would have been at your shoulder But don't you do it, master, don't you try! We'll stick together I know how you feel, you're sick You never want to see me again. If that would help, I'd get out What did I care, anyway? It was nothing to me Whatever I got you gave me afterward. It was your idea I never asked I don't need money I don't drink, I don't smoke All I want is to rove over the mountains, to do what I like, to be free I want to be my own master You trusted me, and I was proud of it I know how you feel We are like brothers I'll take the blame You needn't worry They can grind me to powder but I'll never say a word. I'll tell them I did it—it was I—because—it's none of their business—just because I don't care what they give me they can make it ten years, fifteen What's the difference? Then you fix it, you have influence Only don't let them make it too much. Get busy, cut it down Others have done the same In four or five years everything will have blown over Only I don't want you to forget When I come out we will be brothers, the same as before We can work together, we can do what we please Only I mean to be my own master, to have power, to feel power in my hands!

Nobody can stand alone We'll be brothers  
Hush! Some one is coming—the mistress!

[*RAIMUNDA enters, carrying a water-jar She sees ESTEBAN and RUBIO and stops short, dazed After hesitating for a moment she proceeds to fill the jar from a pitcher*]

*Rubio* Señora!

*Raimunda* Get out of my house! Don't you come near me! What are you doing here? I never want to see you again

*Rubio* Oh! You are going to see me again—and hear me.

*Raimunda* What do you mean? This is my house

*Rubio* Just a word Soon we will all be in court We had better fix it beforehand Because a few fools open their mouths is no reason why a good man should go to prison

*Raimunda* More than one will go You don't expect to get out of it?

*Rubio* I don't know Only one will go, but that one will be I

*Raimunda* It will?

*Rubio* But when I shut my mouth I don't want other people to talk Take it from me what you think is not so Norbert and his father are back of these lies, they are the ones who do all the lying They made up that song, too It's a lie, and they know it

*Raimunda* Is that so? You have agreed then on your story? Well, I don't believe one word of it Gossip and songs are nothing to me I believe nothing but the truth, the truth that I know—and I know it so well that I have known it all along I guessed it from the beginning I might have thought—but no, I never thought anything of you He, he might have confessed, it would have been only fair He might have known that I would hold my tongue, not for him, but for this house—which was my father's house—for my daughter, for my own sake But why should I keep still when everybody knows it, and the very stones shout? They sing it from the housetops

*Rubio* So long as you keep still, the rest can sing all they want to

*Raimunda* Keep still? To save you? I could scream at the very sight of you! I could raise the village!

*Rubio* Don't be a fool! What's the use?

*Raimunda* Of course you weren't a fool when you murdered a man And you nearly

murdered another—in this house—or had him murdered

*Rubio* I wouldn't have been a fool if I had

*Raimunda* You are a coward! You are a murderer!

*Rubio* Your wife is speaking to you, master

*Esteban* Rubio!

*Rubio* You see he can hear

*Raimunda* Yes, hang your head before this man. What a humiliation! You are his slave for the rest of your life. Could any fate be more horrible? Now this house has a master. Thank God, he cannot be less jealous of its honor than you!

*Esteban* Raimunda!

*Raimunda* When I talk, you interrupt. You are not afraid of me

*Esteban* If I had been man enough, I would have put a bullet through my head, and have been done with it

*Rubio* Oh, master!

*Esteban* No! Stop there! That's all I'll take from you. Get out! What are you waiting for? Do you want me to beg you on my knees?

*Raimunda* Oh!

*Rubio* No, master. I am going. [To Raimunda] If it hadn't been for me, there wouldn't have been any murder, but you might have lost a child. Now you have another. The blood made him faint, a bad turn, that was all. But he's better. I am a good doctor. Some time you can thank me for it. Don't forget. I'll show you how. [Goes out]

*Esteban* Don't cry any more. I can't bear to see you cry. I am not worth all these tears. I ought never to have come back, I ought to have starved amid the brambles and thickets—they should have hunted me down like a wolf. I would not have raised my hand. Don't reproach me! Over and over again I have said to myself more than you can say. I have called myself murderer, assassin, times without number. Let me go. This is no longer my home. Turn me out! I am only waiting for them to take me. I don't go out on the road and give myself up, because I am too weak, my heart sinks, I am at the end of my tether. If you don't want me, tell me to go, and I will creep onto the highway and throw myself down in the fields, like carrion which you cast from your door.

*Raimunda* Yes, give yourself up! Bring shame and ruin on this house, drag my daugh-

ter's honor in the dust and mire of the village. I should have been the law to you, you ought to have thought of me. Do you suppose that I believe in these tears because this is the first time I ever saw you cry? Better you had cried your eyes out the day that wicked thought first entered your mind, rather than have turned them where you had no right. Now you cry—but what am I to do? Look at me. Nobody knows what I have been through. It could not be worse. I want to forget, but I must think—think how I can hide the shame which has fallen on this house, keep it out of men's sight, prevent a man from being dragged from this house to prison—a man I brought into it to be a father to my child! This was my father's house, here my brothers lived with the fear of God in their hearts, and from it they went to serve their King, or to marry, or to till other fields by their labor. When they re-entered these doors it was with the same honor with which they went forth. Don't cry, don't hang your head. Hold it high, as I do. In a few minutes the officers will be here to trap us all. Though the house burn, and they are in it, they shall not smell the smoke. Dry your eyes, you have wept blood. Take a sip of water—I wish it was poison. Don't drink so fast, you are overheated. The thorns have torn your skin. You deserved knives. Let me wash you off, it makes my blood creep to look at you.

*Esteban* Raimunda! Wife! Pity me! You don't know. Don't talk to me. No, I am the one who must talk—I must confess as I shall confess at the hour of my doom! You don't know how I have struggled. I have wrestled all these years as with another man who was stronger than I, night and day, who was dragging me where I did not want to go.

*Raimunda* But when—when did that evil thought first enter your mind? When was that unhappy hour?

*Esteban* I don't know. It came upon me like a blight, all at once, it was there. All of us think some evil in our lives, but the thought passes away, it does no harm, it is gone. When I was a boy, one day my father beat me. Quick as a flash it came to me "I wish he was dead!" But no sooner thought, than I was ashamed—I was ashamed to think that I had ever had such a thought. My heart stood still within me for fear that God had heard, that he would take him away. From

that day I loved him more, and when he died, years afterward, I grieved as much for that thought as I did for his death, although I was a grown man. And this might have been the same, but this did not go away. It became more fixed the more I struggled to shake it off. You can't say that I did not love you. I loved you more every day! You can't say that I cast my eyes on other women—and I had no thought of her. But when I felt her by me my blood took fire. When we sat down to eat, I was afraid to look up. Wherever I turned she was there, before me—always! At night, when we were in bed, and I was lying close by you in the midnight silence of the house, all I could feel was her. I could hear her breathe as if her lips had been at my ear. I wept for spite, for bitterness! I prayed to God, I scourged myself. I could have killed myself—and her! Words cannot tell the horror I went through. The few times that we were alone, I ran from her like a wild man. If I had stayed I don't know what might have happened. I might have kissed her, I might have dug my knife into her!

*Raimunda* Yes, you were mad—and you did not know it. It could only have ended in death. Why didn't we find some man for her? She could have married. You ought not to have kept her from Norbert.

*Esteban* It was not her marrying, it was her going away. I could not live without the feel of her, I craved her day and night. All her hate, her spite, her turning away—which she always did—cut me to the heart, then, I came to depend upon it. I could not live without it, it was part of my life. That is what it was—I didn't realize it myself, because it always seemed to me as if it could not be—such things could not really be. I was afraid to face it. But now, I have confessed it to you. It is true! It is true! I can never forgive myself, not even though you might forgive me.

*Raimunda* The evil cannot be cured by forgiveness, if I do not forgive you, it will not take the evil away. When I first heard of it, it seemed to me that no punishment could be too severe. Now, I don't know. To do what you did, you must have been all evil. But you were always kind and good, in season and out, to my daughter, when she was a child, when she was grown—and to me. I have seen it with my own eyes. You were good to all the servants from the day that you entered

this house, to the men, to everybody who came near. You have been faithful and loyal, and worked hard for the honor of this house. A man cannot be good so long and become all bad in one day. Yet these things are, I know it. It chills my heart. When my mother was alive—God rest her soul—we always laughed because she used to say that many a deed had been foretold in this world that afterward took place exactly as it had been foretold. We never believed it, but now I know it is true. The dead do not leave us when they die, though we lay them in the ground. They walk by the side of those that they loved in this life, of those that they hated with a hate that was stronger than death. They are with us, day and night. We do not see them, but they whisper in our ears. They put thoughts into our minds which are evil and wicked and strange, which we never can believe could be part of ourselves.

*Esteban* Do you mean?

*Raimunda* Vengeance! This is vengeance from the other world. My daughter's father will not forgive me in heaven, he will never accept a second father for his child. There are some things which we cannot explain in this life. A good man like you cannot, all of a sudden, cease to be good, for you were good.

*Esteban* I was—I was always. When you say it, you don't know what happiness, what boundless joy it is to me!

*Raimunda* Hush! Not so loud! I hear some one in the other part of the house. It is Norbert's father and his friends. They are going to take him away. If it had been the judge he would have come to this door. Stay here, I'll find out. Go in and wash, change your shirt. Don't let any one see you like this. You look

*Esteban* Like a murderer, eh? Say it.

*Raimunda* No, no, Esteban! We mustn't dwell on these things. We must stop this talk, that is first. Then we can think. Acaena can go to the nuns for a few days at Encinar. They are fond of her, they always ask how she is. Then I can write to my sister-in-law, Eugenia, she likes her. She can go to Andrada and live with her. She might marry, who knows? There are fine boys there—the town is rich—and she is the best match in our village. Then she could come back and have her children, and we would be grandfather and grandmother, and grow old with them.

around us, and be happy once more in this house If only

*Esteban* What?

*Raimunda* If only . .

*Esteban* The dead man

*Raimunda* Yes He will always be here, between us

*Esteban* Always The rest we can forget  
[Goes into the room *ACACIA enters*]

*Raimunda* *Acacia*! Were you there?

*Acacia* Yes Why not? Can't you see? Norbert's father is here with the men

*Raimunda* What are they doing?

*Acacia* They seem more reasonable, they were surprised to find him better Now they are waiting for the judge He is down at Sotillo examining the men. He will come here as soon as he is done

*Raimunda* I'll keep an eye on them

*Acacia* I have something to say to you first, mother

*Raimunda* You? Something to say? What is the matter with you? I am frightened You never say anything

*Acacia* I heard what you mean to do with me

*Raimunda* You were listening at the key-hole, were you?

*Acacia* Yes, because it was my duty to hear I had to know what you were doing with this man It seems that I am the one who is in the way in this house I have done nothing wrong, so I have to take the blame, while you stay here and enjoy yourself with your husband You forgive him and turn me out, so that you can be alone together!

*Raimunda* What are you talking about? Who is turning you out? Who ever put that idea into your head?

*Acacia* I heard what you said You want to send me to the convent at Encinar and shut me up, I suppose, for the rest of my life

*Raimunda* How can you say such a thing? Didn't you tell me yourself that you wanted to go there and stay for a few days with the nuns? Didn't I refuse to let you go for fear that you would never come back, if you once saw the inside of the cloister? How often have you begged me to let you go to your Aunt Eugenia? Now, when it would be a good thing for us all, for the good of the family, which is your family—I tell you that we must hold our heads high—now what do you want me to do? Do you expect me to give

up my husband—the man it was your duty to love as a father?

*Acacia* You are as bad as Juliana I suppose it was all my fault?

*Raimunda* I don't say that But he never looked on you as a daughter because you were never a daughter to him

*Acacia* I suppose I flaunted myself in his face? I suppose I made him kill Faustino?

*Raimunda* Not so loud! Somebody might hear!

*Acacia* Well, this time you won't find it so easy to have your way You want to save this man and hush it up, but I am going to tell what I know to the judge, to everybody I have only my honor to think of, not that of a man who hasn't any, who never had any—who is a criminal!

*Raimunda* Silence! Not so loud! It freezes my heart to hear you You hate him—and I had almost forgiven him!

*Acacia* Yes, I do hate him I always did hate him, and he knows it If he doesn't want me to speak, to denounce him, let him kill me I can die—that is what I can do—die Let him kill me! then, perhaps, once for all, you might learn to hate him

*Raimunda* Hush, I say!—Here he comes  
[*ESTEBAN enters*] *Esteban*!

*Esteban* She is right She is not the one who ought to go Only I don't want her to give me up I will do it myself I am strong now I will go out on the road to meet them Let me go, *Raimunda* You have your child You forgive me, but she never will She hated me from the beginning

*Raimunda* No, *Esteban*, don't you go! *Esteban*, my life!

*Esteban* No, let me go, or I will call Norbert's father I will tell him

*Raimunda* [To *ACACIA*] Now you see what you have done It was your fault *Esteban*! *Esteban*!

*Acacia* Mother, don't let him go!

*Raimunda* Ah!

*Esteban* No, she wants to betray me Why did you hate me like this? You never once called me father You don't know how I loved you!

*Acacia* Mother, mother—

*Esteban* *La Malquerida*! The Passion Flower! I hang my head But once—once how I could have loved you!

*Raimunda* For once, call him father

*Esteban* She will never forgive me

*Raimunda* But she must! Throw your arms about his neck Call him father Even the dead will forgive us then, and be happy in our happiness

*Esteban* Daughter!

*Acacia* Esteban! My God! Esteban!

*Esteban* Ah!

*Raimunda* But you don't call him father Has she fainted? Ah! Lip to lip, and you clutch her in your arms! Let go, let go! Now I see why you won't call him father Now I see that it was your fault—and I curse you!

*Acacia* Yes, it was Kill me! It is true, it is true! He is the only man I ever loved

*Esteban* Ah!

*Raimunda* What do you say? What is that? I will kill you—yes, and be damned with it!

*Esteban* Stand back!

*Acacia* Save me!

*Esteban* Stand back, I say!

*Raimunda* Ah! Now I see! It is plain to me now And it is just as well! What is one murder to me? We can all die Here! Come, everybody! The murderer! I have the murderer! Take this wicked woman, for she is not my child!

*Acacia* Run! Get away!

*Esteban* Yes, together—to hell! For I am damned for love of you Come! They can hunt us like wild beasts among the rocks To love you and hold you, I will be as the wild beasts, that know neither father nor mother!

*Raimunda* Help! Help! Come quick! The murderer! The murderer!

[RUBIO, BERNABÉ and JULIANA ap-

pear simultaneously at different doors, followed by others from the village]

*Esteban* Out of my way! Take care who crosses me!

*Raimunda* Stay where you are! The murderer!

*Esteban* Out of my way, I tell you!

*Raimunda* Over my dead body!

*Esteban* Yes— [Raising his gun he shoots RAIMUNDA]

*Raimunda* Ah!

*Juliana* God in heaven!—Raimunda!

*Rubio* What have you done?

*A Man* Kill him!

*Esteban* Yes, kill me! I don't defend myself

*Bernabé* No! Put the law on him!

*Juliana* It was this man, this wretched man!—Raimunda!—He has killed her—Raimunda! Don't you hear?

*Raimunda* Yes, Juliana Don't let me die without confession I am dying now This blood No matter—Acacia! Acacia!

*Juliana* Acacia!—Where is she?

*Acacia* Mother, mother!

*Raimunda* Ah! Then you are not crying for him? It consoles me

*Acacia* No, mother! You are my mother!

*Juliana* She is dying! Quick—Raimunda!

*Acacia* Mother, mother!

*Raimunda* This man cannot harm you now You are saved Blessed be the blood that saves, the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ!

THE END



HE WHO GETS SLAPPED

By LEONID ANDREYEV

*Translated from the Russian by GREGORY ZILBOORG*



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## LEONID ANDREYEV AND HIS PLAYS

LEONID ANDREYEV, the author of *He Who Gets Slapped*, was born in Orel, Russia, in 1871, and died in Finland, in 1919. His reputation was first established by his tales and short-stories. Maxim Gorki was his friend and literary god-father. Between 1905 and 1917 Andreyev wrote twenty-seven plays, singularly unequal in merit, but of which at least half a dozen may be considered masterpieces. During this prolific period of playwriting his fame eclipsed that of all other contemporary Russian dramatists, though his work owed not a little to the stimulus given to it by the plays of Gorki and of Tchekhov.

Andreyev's subject-matter is remarkably complex and varied. Much of it was undoubtedly suggested by the untoward conditions and the dreadful events of his own period. It was a time of wars and assassinations, of wretchedness among the peasantry, of unrest and pessimism in the world of thought. Andreyev lived in the midst of all this, it was a part of him, he could not escape from it. But in his plays, such as *Anathema* and *To the Stars*, he transmutes and universalizes these conditions and events and frees them from the limitations of time and place. He finds his material also within his own mind, a too-delicately poised and rather morbid mind, lodged in a body never free from ills. In the plays that spring primarily from this source are presented perplexing questions of ethics and personality, as in *The Black Maskers*, the gloomy pageant of man's life, as in *The Life of Man*, the deterioration of moral fibre under the impact of bitter and degrading experiences, as in *Katherina Ivanovna* and *He Who Gets Slapped*.

Andreyev's method of treatment takes as wide a range as his material, from convincing realism, as in *Katherina*, through allegorical abstraction, as in *The Life of Man*, and to the wildest fantasy, as in *The Black Maskers*. Whatever the method, symbolism is always present in greater or less degree, either symbolism in details or symbolism that informs and renders significant the action as a whole.

All Russian drama, maintained Andreyev, had touched only the surface of life, and had relied for its effect too much upon external action, hence his theory of a "panpsychic" theatre, a "theatre of the soul", which should represent primarily the inner action of the spirit. He asserts that the most dramatic thing in the world is Thought—and in this is imitative of Maeterlinck. Had he consistently written by this theory alone, his plays would have been purely static. Fortunately, his sheer talent as a story-teller provides enough external movement to hold the interest of the audience.

Undoubtedly, Andreyev's work was influenced by that of other dramatists—the Russians and, from the outside, Maeterlinck, at least, and in many respects it is imitative. Yet none the less it is both powerful and original. Such pictorial imagination, such variety of characterization and insight into the depths of complex characters, such strong, swiftly-moving plots, implying an inner action more significant than the external—are qualities that, in their totality, are perhaps nowhere excelled in modern drama. In all these traits *He Who Gets Slapped* is characteristic of Andreyev. For all its surface realism, the entire play is a symbol. The man of fine sensibilities and intelligence, cheated by life and betrayed by his friend, turns bitter, and revenges himself on the world by deliberately making himself a laughing-stock—and the world takes up his challenge and mocks him delightedly, thereby making itself more ridiculous than the clown himself. It has been said that the play is partly autobiographic, since Andreyev felt that his own ideas, like those of He, had been stolen and prostituted, and that, like the clown, he had been betrayed by his friends.

*He Who Gets Slapped* was first produced in 1915 in Moscow by the Moscow Art Theatre. Its first production in English was in London in 1921 under the title of *The Painted Laugh*. Under its present title it was repeated for a longer run in London in 1926. In the meantime it had been first produced in America by Alexander Dean, at the University of Montana, in 1921, with the Montana Masquers, Maurice Brown, and Ellen Van Volkenberg. In January, 1922, it was presented in New York by the Theatre Guild.

## CHARACTERS

CONSUELO, *a bareback rider in a circus*  
*Billed as "The Bareback Tango*  
*Queen"*

MANCINI, *Consuelo's father*  
HE *a clown in Briquet's circus Billed as*  
*"HE, The One Who Gets*  
*Slapped"*

BRIQUET, *manager of the circus*

ZINIDA, *a lion tamer, Briquet's wife*

ALFRED BEZANO, *a bareback rider*

A GENTLEMAN

BARON REGNARD

JACKSON, *a clown*

TILLY } *musical clowns*  
POLLY }

THOMAS, ANGELICA, *and other actors and*  
*actresses of Briquet's circus*

*The action takes place in one of the large cities of France at the present day.*

## HE WHO GETS SLAPPED

### ACT ONE

A very large, rather dirty room with whitewashed walls To the left, in a niche, is a window, the only outside window in the room, opening on a court-yard The light from it is so dim that even by day the electricity has to be turned on

At the very top of the centre-back wall is a row of small dusty windows They open on the circus hall At night, when the performance is going on a bright light shines through By day they are dark In the same wall is a large white door, reached by two stone steps, and nailed fast

On the right, almost in the corner, is a high, wide, arched doorway which leads to the stables and the ring By day it opens into pale darkness, at night into pale light

The room is used for many purposes 't is the office of Papa Briquet, manager of the circus, here he keeps his little desk It is the cloak-room of some of the actors It is also the room where the cast gathers between calls, during rehearsals or performances Again, it is a checkroom for used circus property, such as gilt armchairs, scenery for pantomimes, and other wares of the circus household The walls are covered with circus announcements and glaring posters

The time is morning In the circus hall a rehearsal is going on, and preparations are being made for the evening performance As the curtain goes up, the cracking whip and the shouts of the riding-master are heard from the ring The stage is empty for a few seconds, then enter Tilly and Polly, the musical clowns, practising a new march Playing on tiny pipes, they step from the dark doorway to the window Their music is agreeable to the ear, but small, mincing, artificially clown-like, like their mincing steps, they wear jackets and resemble each other, same smooth-shaven face, same height, Tilly, the younger, has a scarf around his neck, both have their derbies on the backs of their heads Tilly

glances through the window, then they turn about, still marching

Polly [interrupting the march] Stop, you're out again! Now listen—[He stands close to TILLY and plays into his face TILLY absent-mindedly listens, scratching his nose] There! Come on now! [They resume their music and marching As they reach the door they meet the manager and MANCINI, the latter walks behind the manager, and is gnawing at the knob of his gold-mounted cane COUNT MANCINI is tall and slight The seams of his clothes are worn and he keeps his coat buttoned tight He assumes extremely graceful manners, takes affected poses, and has a special fondness for toying with his cane, with aristocratic stylishness When he laughs, which happens often, his thin sharp face takes on a marked resemblance to a satyr The manager, "PAPA" BRIQUET, is a stout quiet man of average height His bearing is hesitant The clowns make room for the gentlemen The manager looks questioningly at the older man]

Polly [with an affected accent] Our music for the pantomime! The March of the Ants!

Briquet Ha! Yes!

[The gentlemen walk in The clowns resume their music, POLLY marching on, then turning, the younger following]

Polly Papa Briquet, Jack is working very badly to-day

Briquet What's the matter with him?

Polly He has a sore throat You'd better take a look at him

Briquet All right Come on, Jack Open your mouth! Wider—wider [Turns clown's face to the light near the window and examines him closely and seriously] Just smear it with iodine

Polly I told him so I said it was nothing! Oh! Come on [They go away nothing, marching, practising their funny mincing steps The manager sits down MAN-

CINI strikes a pose by the wall, smiling ironically]

Mancini So You give them medical treatment, too! Look out, Papa Briquet, you have no licence

Briquet Just a little advice They're all so afraid for their lives

Mancini His throat is simply burnt with whiskey These two fellows get drunk every night I am amazed, Papa Briquet, to see you pay so little attention to their morals [He laughs]

Briquet You make me sick, Mancini

Mancini Count Mancini is at your service!

Briquet You make me sick, Count Mancini You poke your nose into everything, you disturb the artists in their work Some day you'll get a thrashing, and I warn you that I shan't interfere

Mancini As a man of superior associations and education I cannot be expected to treat your actors as my equals! What more can you ask, Briquet? You see that I do you the honour of speaking with you quite familiarly, quite simply

Briquet Ha! ha! ha! [Slightly threatening] Really!—

Mancini Never mind my joke What if they did dare attack me—ever seen this, Briquet? [He draws a stiletto out of his cane and advances it silently] Useful little thing By the way, you have no idea of the discovery I made yesterday in a suburb Such a girl! [Laughs] Oh, well! all right, all right—I know you don't like that sort of sport But look here, you must give me a hundred francs!

Briquet Not a sou

Mancini Then I'll take away Consuelo—that's all—

Briquet Your daily threat!

Mancini Yes, my threat! And you would do the same, if you were as shamefully hard up as I am Now look here, you know as well as I do that I have to live up to my name somehow, keep up the family reputation Just because the tide of ill-fortune which struck my ancestors compelled me to make my daughter, the Countess Veronica, a bareback rider—to keep us from starving—do you understand—you heartless idiot!

Briquet You chase the girls too much! Some day you'll land in jail, Mancini!

Mancini In jail? Oh, no! Why, I have

to uphold our name, the splendour of my family [laughs], haven't I? The Mancinis are known all over Italy for their love of girls—just girls! Is it my fault if I must pay such crazy prices for what my ancestors got free of charge? You're nothing but an ass, a *parvenu* ass How can you understand Family Traditions? I don't drink—I stopped playing cards after that accident—no, you need not smile Now if I give up the girls, what will be left of Mancini? Only a coat of arms, that's all—In the name of family traditions, give me a hundred francs!

Briquet I told you no, I won't

Mancini You know that I leave half of the salary for Consuelo—but—perhaps you think I do not love my child—my only daughter, all that remains to me as a memory of her sainted mother—what cruelty! [Pretends to cry, wipes his eyes with a small and dirty lace handkerchief, embroidered with a coronet]

Briquet Why don't you say, rather, that she is foolish enough to give you half her salary You make me sick—

[Enter ZINIDA, the lion tamer, burningly beautiful, her self-confident, commanding gestures at first glance give an impression of languor She is BRIQUET'S unmarried wife]

Zinida [to MANCINI] Good morning

Mancini Madame Zinida! This barbarian, this brute may pierce me with his dagger, but I cannot control the expression of my love! [Kneels facetiously before her] Madame! Count Mancini has the honour of asking you to be his wife. . . .

Zinida [to BRIQUET] Money?

Briquet Yes

Zinida Don't give him any [Sits down wearily on a torn sofa, shuts her eyes MANCINI gets up and wipes his knees]

Mancini Duchess! Don't be cruel I am no lion, no tiger, no savage beast which you are accustomed to tame I am merely a poor domestic animal, who wants, miaow, miaow a little green grass

Zinida [without opening her eyes] Jim tells me you have a teacher for Consuelo What for?

Mancini The solicitude of a father, duchess, the solicitude and the tireless anxiety of a loving heart The extreme misfortunes of our family, when I was a child,

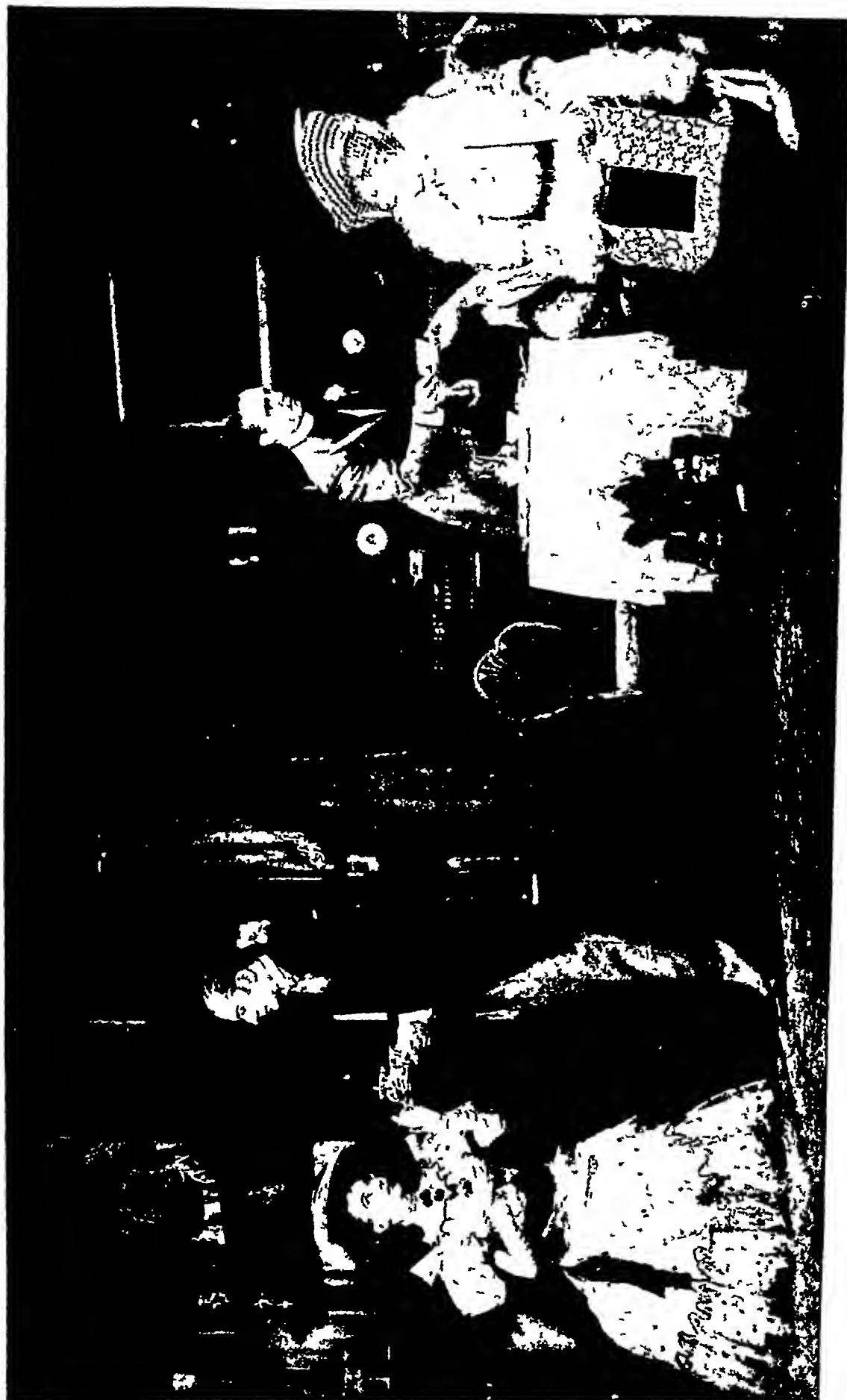
# ILLUSTRATIONS



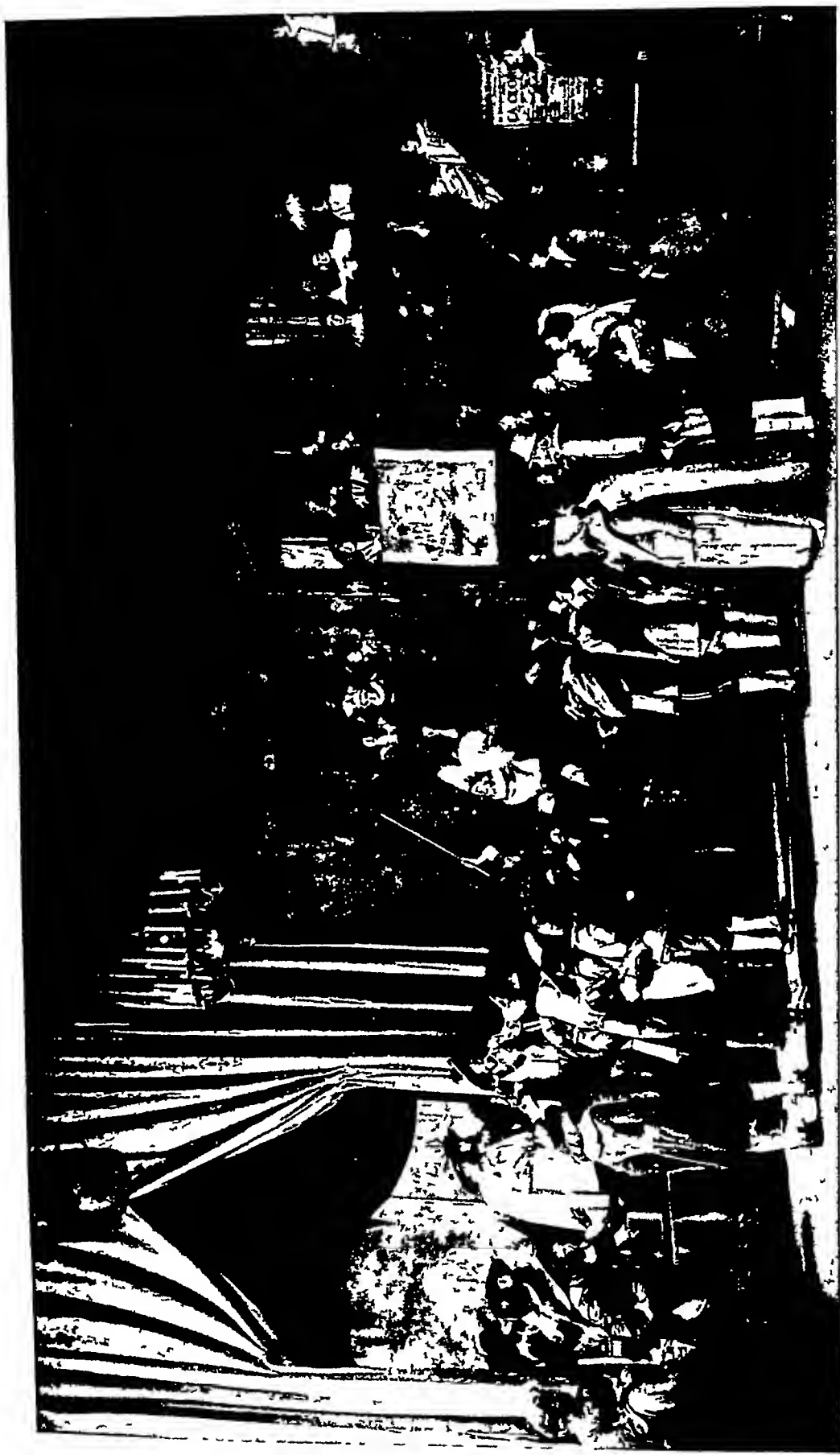


PELLEAS AND MELISANDE, ACT III, SCENE I Mrs Patrick Campbell as  
Mélisande, Mme Sarah Bernhardt as Pelleas (Bruguère Collection, New  
York Public Library Theater Collection )

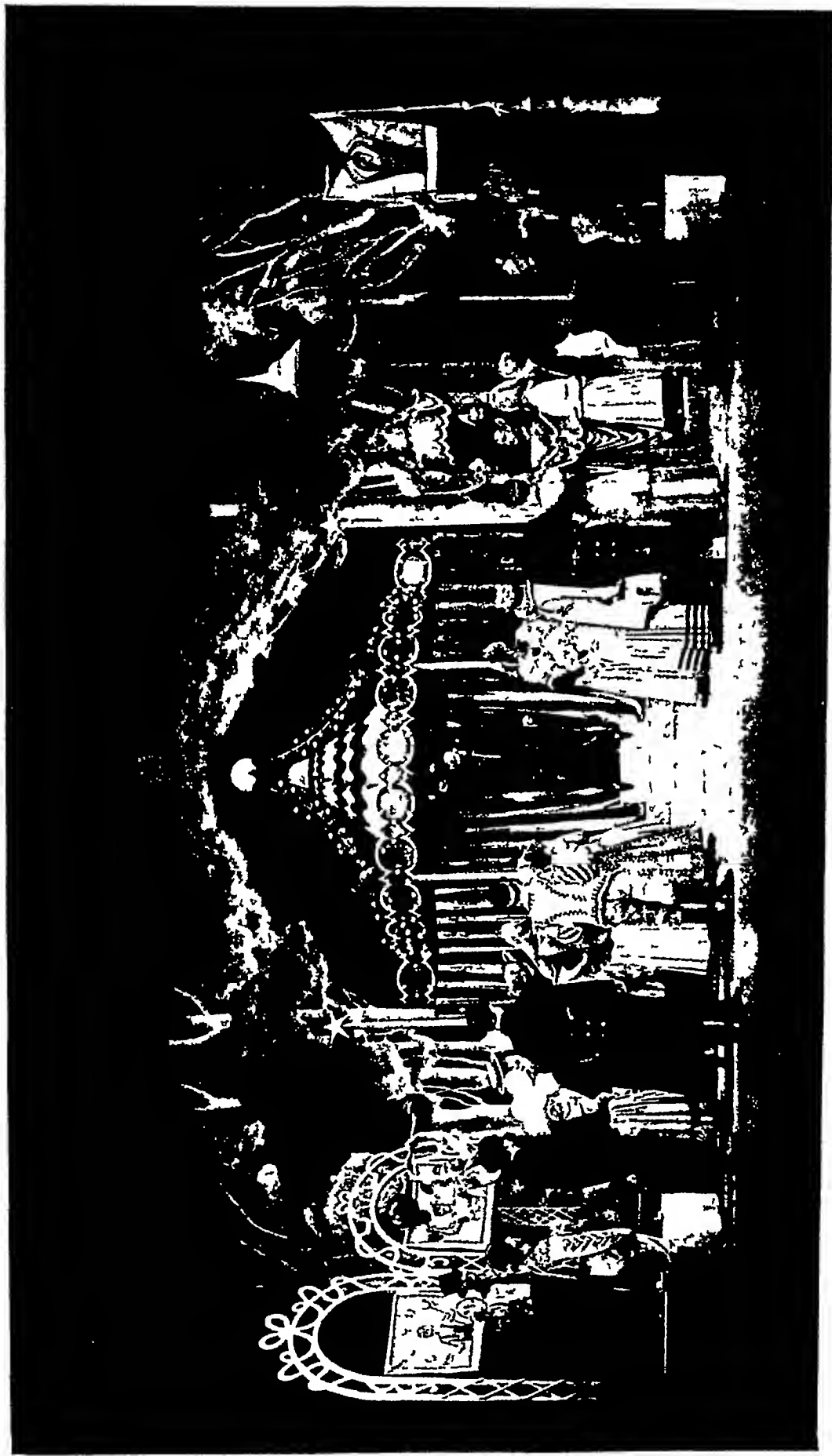




THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST, Act I *Lady Bracknell* "I've quite a treat for you tonight, Algernon I am going to send you down with Mary Farquhar" (Cf p 133) Pamela Brown, John Gielgud, Robert Flemyng, Margaret Rutherford in the Theater Guild production (Photo by Vandamm)



CYRANO DE BERGERAC, Act I *Cyrano* "Ah! I shall lose my temper!" (Cf p 169) Walter Hampden production of Brian Hooker's version of Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, with settings by Claude Bragdon (Photo by White)



LILIOM, PROLOGUE Burgess Meredith as Lihom haranguing the crowd (Photo by Vandamm)



"I had to do that"

(Drawing from the *Illustrarte*

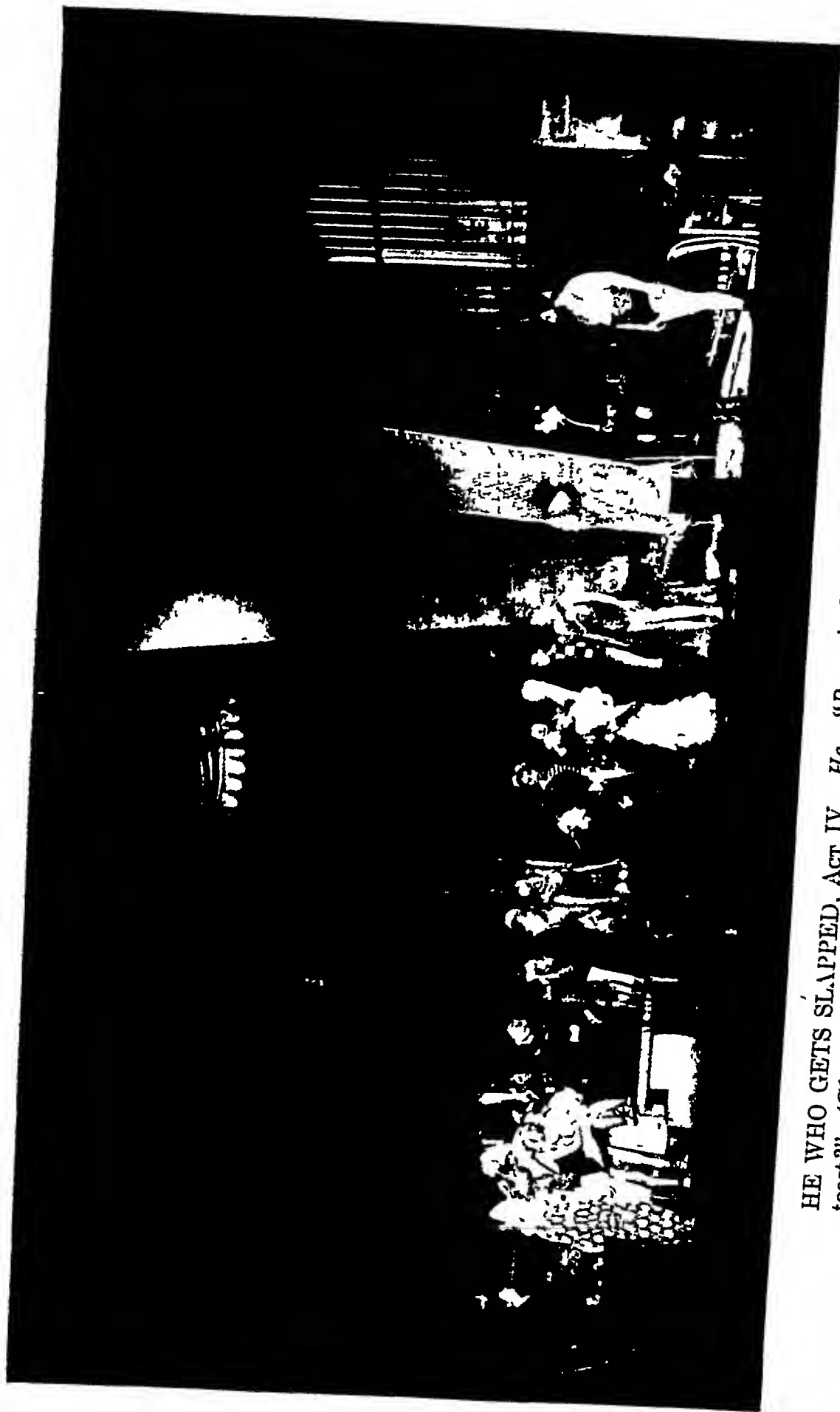
THE RATS, Act V Mrs John

"Paul, I couldn't do no different

(Drawing of the original German production

(Cf p 453) Drawing of the original German production

Zeitang New York Public Library Theater Collection )



HE WHO GETS SLAPPED, ACT IV He "Baion! Will you permit me to make a toast?" (Cf p 521) Dennis King as He in the Theater Guild production (Photo by Vandamm)



JOHN FERGUSON, Act III *James Caesar* "I'm not sorry he's dead, but it wasn't me that killed him" (Cf p 563) Dudley Digges, Helen Wesley, Augustin Duncan in the Theater Guild production (Photo by Vandamm)



GAS—I, Act IV *Mother* "Mothers and Mothers and Mothers, you!—sons cry out in you—do not strangle their cries, stay away from the works ." (Cf p. 619 ) Produced by the Stadttheater, Amsterdam (Photo from *Das Theater* New York Public Library Theater Collection )



R U R , Act III *Radius* "Finished him ?" (Cf p 670 ) Theater Guild production  
(Bruguère Collection, New York Public Library )





THE SILVER CORD, Act III *Mrs Phelps* "My two boys in partnership! Oh, that's always been my dream!" (Cf p 715) *Laura Hope Crews as Mrs Phelps* (Photo by Vandamm)



THE GREAT GOD BROWN, Act IV, Scene 2 Margaret "My lover! My husband!  
My boy! You can never die till my heart dies!" (Cf p 798) William Harrigan,  
Anne Shoemaker, Leona Hogarth (Bruguère Collection, New York Public Library)



THE PLOUGH AND THE STARS, ACT IV Noia "What place is this? Where am I?"  
(Cf p 757) The Irish Players Shelah Richards, Sara Allgood, Arthur Sinclair, Sydney  
Morgan, J A O'Rourke (Photo by White)



THE INFERNAL MACHINE, Act II *The Sphinx* "What brings you back here?"  
*Oedipus* "The collecting of my due" (Cf p 909) From the production by Louis  
Jouvet at the Athenec, Paris (Photo by Lipnitzki, Paris)



COMMAND DECISION, Act I. *Kane* "Cliff, this is one of our real heroes." (Cf p 970 ) The Kermit Bloomgarden production with Jay Fassett and Paul Kelley. (Photographer, Eileen Derby, Graphic House, Inc )

have left some flaws in her education Friends, the daughter of Count Mancini, Countess Veronica, can barely read! Is that admissible? And you, Briquet, heartless brute, you still ask why I need money!

*Zimda* Artful!

*Briquet* What are you teaching her?

*Mancini* Everything A student had been giving her lessons, but I threw him out yesterday He had the nerve to fall in love with Consuelo and stood there miaowing at the door like a cat Everything, Briquet, that you don't know—literature, mythology, orthography—

*[Two young actresses appear, with small fur coats thrown over their light dresses They are tired and sit down in the corner]*

*Mancini* I do not wish my daughter—

*Zimda* Artful!

*Briquet* You are stupid, Mancini What do you do it for? *[In a didactic tone]* You are fearfully stupid, Mancini Why does she need to learn? Since she is here she need never know anything about that life Don't you understand? What is geography? If I were the government I would forbid artists to read books Let them read the posters, that's enough

*[During BRIQUET'S speech, the two clowns and another actor enter They sit down wearily]*

*Briquet* Right now, your Consuelo is an excellent artist, but just as soon as you teach her mythology, and she begins to read, she'll become a nuisance, she'll be corrupted, and then she'll go and poison herself I know those books, I've read 'em myself All they teach is corruption, and how to kill oneself

*First Actress* I love the novels that come out in the newspaper

*Briquet* That shows what a foolish girl you are You'll be done for in no time Believe me, my friends, we must forget entirely what is happening out there How can we understand all that goes on there?

*Mancini* You are an enemy of enlightenment, you are an obscurantist, Briquet

*Briquet* And you are stupid You are from out there What has it taught you? *[The actors laugh]* If you'd been born in a circus as I was, you'd know something Enlightenment is plain nonsense—nothing else Ask Zimda She knows everything

they teach out there—geography, mythology—Does it make her any happier? You tell them, dear

*Zimda* Leave me alone, Louis

*Mancini* *[angrily]* Oh! Go to the devil! When I listen to your asinine philosophy, I'd like to skin you for more than a paltry hundred francs—for two hundred—for a thousand Great God! What an ass of a manager! Yes, right before every one of them I want to say that you are a stingy old skinflint—that you pay starvation wages I'll make you give Consuelo a raise of a hundred francs Listen, all you honest vagabonds, tell me—who is it draws the crowd that fills the circus every night? You? a couple of musical donkeys? Tigers, lions? Nobody cares for those hungry cats!

*Zimda* Leave the tigers alone

*Mancini* Beg your pardon, Zimda I did not mean to hurt your feelings—honestly I really marvel at your furious audacity—at your grace—you are a heroine—I kiss your tiny hands But what do they understand about heroism? *[An orchestra softly plays the Tango in the circus He continues with enthusiasm]* Hear! hear! Now tell me, honest vagabonds, who but Consuelo and Bezano draws the crowds! That Tango on horseback—it is—it is—Oh, the devil! Even his fatuousness the Pope could not withstand its lure

*Polly* True! It's a great trick—wasn't the idea Bezano's?

*Mancini* Idea! Idea! The lad's in love, like a cat—that's the idea What's the good of an idea without a woman! You wouldn't dance very far with your idea alone, eh, Papa Briquet?

*Briquet* We have a contract

*Mancini* Such base formalities

*Zimda* Give him ten francs and let him go

*Mancini* Ten! Never! Fifteen! Don't be stubborn, Papa For the traditions of my house—twenty I swear—on my honour—I can't do with less *[Briquet hands him twenty francs Nonchalantly]* Merci Thanks

*Zimda* Why don't you take it from your baron?

*Mancini* *[raising his eyebrows haughtily, quite indignant]* From the Baron?

Woman! who do you think I am that I should be beholden to a stranger?

*Zinida* You're plotting something artful. I know you very little, but I guess you're an awful scoundrel

*Mancini* [laughs] Such an insult from such beautiful lips.

[Enter an "artist," apparently an athlete]

*Athlete*. Papa Briquet, there's a gentleman from beyond the grave asking for you

*Actress* A ghost?

*Athlete* No He seems alive. Did you ever see a drunken ghost?

*Briquet* If he's drunk, tell him I'm out, Thomas Does he want to see me or the Count?

*Athlete*. No, you Maybe he's not drunk, but just a ghost

*Mancini* [draws himself together, puffs up] A society man?

*Athlete* Yes I'll tell him to come in.

[One hears the whip cracking in ring The Tango sounds very low and distant—then comes nearer—louder Silence]

*Briquet* [touching ZINIDA'S arm] Tired?

*Zinida* [drawing back a little] No

*Polly* Your red lion is nervous to-day, Zinida!

*Zinida* You shouldn't tease him

*Polly* I played a melody from Traviata for him And he sang with me Wouldn't that be a good trick to stage, Papa Briquet?

[THOMAS brings in the gentleman, points out the manager, and goes heavily away The gentleman is not young, and he is ugly, but his rather strange face is bold and lively He wears an expensive overcoat, with a fur collar, and holds his hat and gloves in his hand]

*The Gentleman* [bowing and smiling] Have I the pleasure of addressing the manager?

*Briquet* Yes Won't you sit down, please? Tilly, bring a chair

*Gentleman* Oh! Don't trouble. [Looks around] These are your artists? Very glad—

*Mancini* [straightening and bowing slightly] Count Mancini

*Gentleman* [surprised] Count?

*Briquet* [indefinitely] Yes, Count And whom have I the honour of—

*Gentleman* I don't quite know myself—yet As a rule you chose your own names, don't you? I have not chosen yet Later you might advise me about it I have an idea already, but I am afraid it sounds too much like literature—you know.

*Briquet* Literature?

*Gentleman* Yes! Too sophisticated. [They all look surprised] I presume these two gentlemen are clowns? I am so glad May I shake hands with them? [Stands up and shakes hands with clowns, who make silly faces]

*Briquet*. Excuse me—but what can I do for you?

*Gentleman* [with the same pleasant, confident smile] Oh You do something for me? No I want to do something for you, Papa Briquet

*Briquet* Papa Briquet? But you don't look like . . .

*Gentleman* [reassuringly]. It's all right I shall become "like" These two gentlemen just made remarkable faces Would you like to see me imitate them? Look! [He makes the same silly faces as the clowns]

*Briquet* Yes! [Involuntarily] You are not drunk, sir?

*Gentleman*. No I don't drink as a rule. Do I look drunk?

*Polly* A little

*Gentleman* No—I don't drink It is a peculiarity of my talent

*Briquet* [familarly]. Where did you work before? Juggler?

*Gentleman* No But I am glad you feel in me a comrade, Papa Briquet Unfortunately I am not a juggler, and have worked nowhere—I am—just so

*Mancini* But you look like a society man

*Gentleman* Oh, you flatter me, Count. I am just so

*Briquet* Well, what do you want? You see I am obliged to tell you that everything is taken

*Gentleman* That's immaterial I want to be a clown, if you will allow me [Some of the actors smile, BRIQUET begins to grow angry]

*Briquet* But what can you do? You're asking too much. What can you do?

*Gentleman* Why! Nothing! Isn't that funny! I can't do a thing.

*Briquet* No, it's not funny. Any scoundrel knows that much.

*Gentleman* [rather helpless, but still smiling and looking around] We can invent something—

*Briquet* [ironically] From literature?

[The clown JACKSON enters slowly without being noticed by the others. He stands behind the gentlemen.]

*Gentleman* Yes, one can find something literary, too. A nice little speech for instance on, let's say, a religious topic. Something like a debate among the clowns.

*Briquet* A debate! The devil! This is no academy.

*Gentleman* [sadly] I am very sorry. Something else then. Perhaps a joke about the creation of the world and its rulers?

*Briquet* What about the police? No, no—nothing like that!

*Jackson* [coming forward] The rulers of the world? You don't like them? I don't either. Shake.

*Briquet* [introducing] Our chief clown, the famous Jackson.

*Gentleman* [enthusiastically] Great heavens—you! Allow me to shake hands with you heartily! You, with your genius, you have given me so much joy!

*Jackson* I'm glad indeed!

*Briquet* [shrugs his shoulders; to JACKSON] He wants to be a clown! Look him over, Jim.

[JACKSON makes a motion at which the gentleman hurriedly removes his coat and throws it on a chair. He is ready for the examination. JACKSON turns him round, looking him over critically.]

*Jackson*. Clown? Hm! Turn round then. Clown? Yes? Now smile. Wider—broader—do you call that a smile? So—that's better. There is something, yes—but for full development—[Sadly] Probably you can't even turn a somersault?

*Gentleman* [sighs] No.

*Jackson* How old are you?

*Gentleman* Thirty-nine. Too late?

[JACKSON moves away with a whistle. There is a silence.]

*Zinida* [softly] Take him.

*Briquet* [indignant] What the hell shall I do with him if he doesn't know a thing? He's drunk!

*Gentleman* Honestly, I am not. Thank you for your support, Madame. Are you not the famous Zinida, the lion tamer, whose regal beauty and audacity—

*Zinida* Yes. But I do not like flattery.

*Gentleman* It is not flattery.

*Mancini* You are evidently not accustomed to good society, my dear. Flattery? This gentleman expresses his admiration in sincere and beautiful words—and you—you are not educated, Zinida. As for myself—

[Enter CONSUELO and BEZANO in circus costume.]

*Consuelo* You here, Daddy?

*Mancini* Yes, my child, you are not tired? [Kisses her on the forehead] My daughter, sir, Countess Veronica. Known on the stage as Consuelo, The Bareback Tango Queen. Did you ever see her?

*Gentleman* I have enjoyed her work. It is marvellous!

*Mancini* Yes! Of course. Everyone admits it. And how do you like the name, Consuelo? I took it from the novel of George Sand. It means "Consolation."

*Gentleman* What a wonderful knowledge of books!

*Mancini* A small thing. Despite your strange intention, I can see, sir, that you are a gentleman. My peer! Let me explain to you, that only the strange and fatal misfortunes of our ancient family—"sic transit gloria mundi," sir—

*Consuelo* It's a bore, Daddy—Where's my handkerchief, Alfred?

*Bezano* Here it is.

*Consuelo* [showing the handkerchief to the gentleman] Genuine Venetian. Do you like it?

*Gentleman* [again bowing] My eyes are dazzled! How beautiful! Papa Briquet, the more I look round me the more I want to stay with you. [Makes the face of a simpleton] On the one hand a count, on the other—Jackson [nods approval]. That's not bad. Look here, think a bit—



find something Everyone here thinks for himself

[Silence The gentleman stands with a finger on his forehead, thinking]

Gentleman Find something—find something Eureka!

Polly That means found Come!

Gentleman Eureka—I shall be among you, he who gets slapped

[General laughter. Even BRIQUET smiles]

Gentleman [looks at them smiling] You see I made even you laugh—is that easy? [All grow serious. POLLY sighs]

Tilly No, it's not easy Did you laugh, Polly?

Polly Sure, a lot Did you?

Tilly I did [Imitating an instrument, he plays with his lips a melody at once sad and gay]

Jackson "He Who Gets Slapped," that's not bad

Gentleman It's not, is it? I rather like it myself It suits my talent And comrades, I have even found a name—you'll call me "He" Is that all right?

Jackson [thinking] "He"—Not bad

Consuelo [in a singing, melodic voice] "He" is so funny—"He"—like a dog Daddy, are there such dogs?

[JACKSON suddenly gives a circus slap to the gentleman. HE steps back and grows pale]

Gentleman What!—[General laughter covers his exclamation]

Jackson He, Who Gets Slapped Or didn't you get it?

Polly [comically] He says he wants more—

[The gentleman smiles, rubbing his cheek]

Gentleman So sudden—Without waiting—How funny—you didn't hurt me, and yet my cheek burns

[Again there is loud laughter The clowns cackle like ducks, hens, cocks, they bark ZINIDA says something to BRIQUET, casts a glance toward BEZANO, and goes out MANCINI assumes a bored air and looks at his watch The two actresses go out]

Jackson Take him, Papa Briquet—he will push us

Mancini [again looking at his watch] But bear in mind, that Papa Briquet is as close as Harpagon If you expect to get good money here you are mistaken [He laughs] A slap? What's a slap? Worth only small change, a franc and a half a dozen Better go back to society, you will make more money there Why for one slap, just a light tap, you might say, my friend, Marquis Justi, was paid fifty thousand lire!

Briquet Shut up, Mancini. Will you take care of him, Jackson?

Jackson I can

Polly Do you like music? A Beethoven sonata played on a broom, for instance, or Mozart on a bottle?

He. Alas! No But I will be exceedingly grateful if you will teach me A clown! My childhood's dream When all my school friends were thrilled by Plutarch's heroes, or the light of science—I dreamed of clowns Beethoven on a broom, Mozart on bottles! Just what I have sought all my life! Friends, I must have a costume!

Jackson I see you don't know much! A costume [putting his finger on his forehead] is a thing which calls for long deep thought Have you seen my Sun here? [Strikes his posterior] I looked for it two years

He [enthusiastically] I shall think!

Mancini It is time for me to go Consuelo, my child, you must get dressed [To He] We are lunching with Baron Regnard, a friend of mine, a banker

Consuelo But I don't want to go, Daddy Alfred says I must rehearse to-day

Mancini [horrified, holding up his hands] Child, think of me, and what a situation you put me in! I promised the Baron, the Baron expects us Why, it is impossible! Oh, I am in a cold sweat

Consuelo Alfred says—

Bezano [dryly] She has to work Are you rested? Then come on

Mancini But—the devil take me if I know what to make of it Hey, Bezano, bareback rider! Are you crazy? I gave you permission for Art's sake, to exercise my daughter's talent—and you—

Consuelo Go along, Papa, and don't be so silly We've got to work, haven't we?

Have lunch alone with your Baron And Daddy, you forgot to take a clean handkerchief again, and I washed two for you yesterday Where did you put them?

*Mancini [ashamed, blushing]* Why, my linen is washed by the laundress, and you, Consuelo, are still playing with toys It is stupid! You're a chatter-box You don't think These gentlemen might imagine Heaven knows what How stupid I'm off

*Consuelo* Do you want me to write him a little note?

*Mancini [angrily]* A little note? Your little notes would make a horse laugh! Good-bye

*[He goes out toying angrily with his cane The clowns follow him respectfully, playing a funeral march HE and JACKSON laugh The actors disappear one by one]*

*Consuelo [laughing]* Do I really write so badly? And I love so to write Did you like my note, Alfred—or did you laugh, too?

*Bezano [blushing]* No, I did not Come on, Consuelo

*[They go, and meet ZINIDA, entering CONSUELO passes on]*

*Zinida* Are you going back to work, Bezano?

*Bezano [politely]* Yes To-day is a very bad day How are your lions, Zinida? I think the weather affects them

*Consuelo [from the ring]* Alfred!

*Zinida* Yes Some one is calling you You'd better go *[ALFRED goes out To BRIQUET]* Are you finished?

*Briquet* Right away

*Jackson* Then good-bye till evening Think about your costume, He, and I shall look for some idea, too Be here at ten to-morrow Don't be late, or you'll get another slap And I'll work with you

*He* I shall not be late *[He looks after JACKSON, who goes out]* Must be a nice man All the people about you are so nice, Papa Briquet I suppose that good-looking bareback rider is in love with Consuelo, isn't he? *[Laughs]*

*Zinida* It's none of your business For a newcomer you go poking your nose too far How much does he want, Papa?

*Briquet* Just a minute See here, He.

I don't want to make a contract with you

*He* Just as you please Do you know what? Don't let us talk about money You are an honest fellow, Briquet, you will see what my work is worth to you, and then—

*Briquet [pleased]* Now that's very nice of you Zinida, the man really doesn't know anything

*Zinida* Well, do as he suggests Now we must write it down Where's the book?

*Briquet* Here *[To HE]* I don't like to write *[gives book to ZINIDA]*, but we have to put down the names of the actors, you know—it's police regulations Then if anyone kills himself, or—

*[Again comes the sound of the Tango, and calls from the ring]*

*Zinida* What is your name?

*He [smiling]* He I chose it, you know Or don't you like it?

*Briquet* We like it all right—but we have to have your real name Have you a passport?

*He [confused]* A passport? No, I have none Or, rather, yes I have something of the kind, but I had no idea the rules were strictly enforced here What do you need papers for?

*[ZINIDA and BRIQUET look at each other ZINIDA pushes the book aside]*

*Zinida* Then we can't take you We cannot quarrel with the police, just on your account

*Briquet* She is my wife I hadn't told you She's right You might get hurt by a horse, or hurt yourself—or do something We don't know you, you see I personally don't care, but out there, it's different, you see For me a corpse is just a corpse—and I don't ask anything about him It's up to God or the Devil But they—they're too curious Well, I suppose it's necessary for order I don't know—Got a card?

*He [rubs his head, thinking]* What shall I do? I have my card, but *[smiles]* you understand that I don't want my name to be known

*Briquet* Some story, hey?

*He* Yes, something like that Why can't you imagine that I have no name? Can't I lose it as I might lose my hat? Or let some one else take it by mistake? When

a stray dog comes to you, you don't ask his name—you simply give him another Let me be that dog [*Laughing*] HE—the Dog!

ZINIDA Why don't you tell us your name, just the two of us? Nobody else need know it Unless you should break your neck—

He [*hesitates*] Honestly? [ZINIDA *shrugs her shoulders*]

Briquet Where people are honest, their word is good One sees you come from out there

He All right But please, don't be surprised [*Gives ZINIDA his card She looks at it, then hands it to BRIQUET, then both look at HE*]

Briquet If it is true, sir, that you are really what is written here—

He For heaven's sake—for heaven's sake—this does not exist, but was lost long ago, it is just a check for an old hat I pray you to forget it, as I have I am HE Who Gets Slapped—nothing else [*Silence*]

Briquet I beg your pardon, sir, but I must ask you again, I must humbly ask you—are you not drunk, sir? There is something in your eye—something—

He No, no I am HE Who Gets Slapped Since when do you speak to me like this, Papa Briquet? You offend me

ZINIDA After all, it's his business, Briquet [*She hides the card*] Truly you are a strange man [*Smiles*] And you have already noticed that Bezano is in love with the horse-girl? And that I love my Briquet, did you notice that, too?

He [*also smiling*] Oh, yes You adore him

ZINIDA I adore him Now go with him, Briquet, show him the ring and the stables—I have something to write

He Yes, yes, please I am so happy. At last you have taken me, haven't you? It is true—you're not joking The circus, the tan-bark, the ring in which I shall run getting my slaps Yes, yes, Briquet, let's go Until I feel the sawdust under my feet, I shall not believe it

Briquet All right then [*Kisses ZINIDA*] Come on

ZINIDA Just a minute—He! Answer me a question I have a man who takes care of the cages, a plain fellow whom nobody knows He just clears the cages, you

know; he walks in and out whenever he wants to, without even looking at the lions, as if he were perfectly at home Why is that so? Nobody knows him, everybody knows me, everyone is afraid for me, while—And he is such a silly man—you will see him [*Laughs*] But don't you think of entering the cage yourself! My red one would give you such a slap!

Briquet [*displeased*] There you are again ZINIDA—stop it

ZINIDA [*laughs*] All right—go Oh yes, Louis, send me Bezano I have to settle an account with him

[HE and the director go out  
ZINIDA looks at the card once more, then hides it She gets up and walks quickly up and down the room She stops to listen to the Tango, which ends abruptly Then she stands motionless, looking straight at the dark opening of the door through which BEZANO comes]

Bezano [*entering*] You called me, ZINIDA? What do you want? Tell me quickly, I have no time—

[ZINIDA looks at him silently  
BEZANO flushes with anger, and knits his eyebrows He turns to the door to go]

ZINIDA Bezano!

Bezano [*stops, without looking up*]. What do you want? I have no time

ZINIDA Bezano! I keep hearing people say that you are in love with Consuelo Is it true?

Bezano [*shrugging his shoulders*]. We work well together

ZINIDA [*takes a step forward*]. No—Tell me, Alfred, do you love her?

Bezano [*flushes like a boy, but looks straight into ZINIDA's eyes Proudly*] I do not love anybody No, I love nobody. How can I? Consuelo? She is here to-day, gone to-morrow, if her father should take her away And I? Who am I? An acrobat, the son of a Milanese shoemaker—She! I cannot even talk about it Like my horses I have no words Who am I to love?

ZINIDA Do you love me? A little?

Bezano No I told you before

ZINIDA Still no? Not even a little?

*Bezano* [after a silence] I am afraid of you

*Zimda* [wants to cry out, indignantly, but masters herself and lowers her eyes, as if in an effort to shut out their light, turns pale] Am I. so terrifying a woman—

*Bezano* You are beautiful, like a queen. You are almost as beautiful as Consuelo. But I don't like your eyes. Your eyes command me to love you—and I don't like to be commanded. I am afraid of you.

*Zimda* Do I command, Bezano? No—only implore.

*Bezano* Then why not look at me straight? Now I have it. You know yourself that your eyes cannot implore. [Laughs] Your lions have spoiled you.

*Zimda* My red lion loves me—

*Bezano* Never! If he loves you, why is he so sad?

*Zimda* Yesterday he was licking my hands like a dog.

*Bezano* And this morning he was looking for you to devour you. He thrusts out his muzzle and looks out, as if he sees only you. He is afraid of you, and he hates you. Or do you want me to lick your hands too, like a dog?

*Zimda* No, Alfred, but I—I want to kiss your hand. [With passion] Give it to me!

*Bezano* [severely] I am ashamed to listen to you when you speak like that.

*Zimda* [controlling herself] One should not torture another as you torture me, Alfred, I love you. No, I do not command. Look into my eyes—I love you. [Silence]

*Bezano* [turns to go] Good-bye.

*Zimda* Alfred—

[He appears in the doorway, and stops.]

*Bezano* Please never tell me any more that you love. I don't want it. Otherwise I will quit. You pronounce the word as if you were cracking me with your whip. You know it is disgusting—

[He turns brusquely and goes. Both notice HE, BEZANO, frowning, passes out quickly. ZIMDA returns to her place at the desk, with a proudly indifferent expression.]

He [coming in] I beg your pardon, but I—

*Zimda* There you are again, poking

your nose into everything, He. Do you really want a slap?

He [laughing] No. I simply forgot my overcoat. I didn't hear anything.

*Zimda* I don't care whether you did or not.

He May I take my coat?

*Zimda* Take it if it's yours. Sit down, He.

He I am sitting down.

*Zimda* Now tell me, He, could you love me?

He [laughing] I? I and Love! Look at me, *Zimda*. Did you ever see a lover with such a face?

*Zimda* One can succeed with such a face—

He That's because I am happy—because I lost my hat—because I am drunk—or perhaps I am not drunk. But I feel as dizzy as a young girl at her first ball. It is so nice here—slap me, I want to play my part. Perhaps it will awaken love in my heart, too. Love—[as if listening to his own heart with pretended terror] do you know—I feel it!

[In the circus the Tango is played again.]

*Zimda* [listening too] For me?

He No. I don't know. For everyone. [Listens to the music] Yes, they are dancing—how beautiful Consuelo is—and how beautiful is the youth. He has the body of a Greek God, he looks as if he had been modeled by Praxiteles. Love! Love! [Silence, music.]

*Zimda* Tell me, He—

He At your service, Queen!

*Zimda* He, what shall I do, to make my lions love me?

## ACT TWO

The same room, during the evening performance. Occasional music, laughter, shrieks, and applause are audible. Through the small windows, back centre, the light is shining.

CONSUELO and BARON REGNARD occupy the stage, CONSUELO wears her stage costume, she sits with her feet on the sofa, a small shawl covering her shoulders. Before her stands the BARON, a tall stout man in evening dress, a rose in his buttonhole, grasping the ground with feet well apart,

he gazes at her with convex spider-like eyes

*Baron* Is it true that your father, the Count, has introduced you to a certain Marquis Just, a very rich man?

*Consuelo* [surprised] No, he is only joking. I have often heard him speak of a Marquis Just, but I have never seen him

*Baron* And do you know that your father is just a charlatan?

*Consuelo* Oh! Don't say that—Father is such a dear.

*Baron* Did you like the jewels?

*Consuelo* Yes, very much. I was very sorry when Father told me I must return them. He said it would not be nice for me to keep them. I even cried a little about it.

*Baron* Your father is only a beggar and a charlatan.

*Consuelo* Oh, no, don't scold him—he loves you so much.

*Baron* Let me kiss your hand—

*Consuelo* Oh, no, it isn't proper! One may kiss the hand only when one says how do you do or good-bye. But in the meantime you can't.

*Baron* Everybody is in love with you, that is why you and your father make such a fuss about yourselves. Who is that new clown they call He? I don't like him, he's too shrewd a beast . . . Is he in love with you, too? I noticed the way he looked at you.

*Consuelo* [laughing] Nothing of the kind. He is so funny! He got fifty-two slaps yesterday. We counted them. Think of it, fifty-two slaps! Father said, "if they had only been gold pieces."

*Baron* And Bezano, Consuelo. Do you like him?

*Consuelo* Yes, very much. He is so good-looking. He says that Bezano and I are the most beautiful couple in the world. He calls him Adam, and me Eve. But that's improper, isn't it? He is so improper.

*Baron* And does He speak to you very often?

*Consuelo* Yes, often. But I don't understand him. It seems as if he were drunk.

*Baron* "Consuelo"! . . . It means in

Spanish . . . Consolation. Your father is an ass. Consuelo, I love you.

*Consuelo* Talk it over with Father.

*Baron* [angry] Your father is a swindler and a charlatan. He should be turned over to the police. Don't you understand that I cannot marry you?

*Consuelo* But Father says you can.

*Baron* No, I cannot. And what if I shoot myself? Consuelo, silly girl, I love you unbearably. . . unbearably, do you understand? I am probably mad and must be taken to a doctor, yanked about, beaten with sticks. Why do I love you so much, Consuelo?

*Consuelo* Then, you'd better marry.

*Baron* I have had a hundred women, beauties, but I didn't see them. You are the first and I don't see any one else. Who strikes man with love, God or the Devil? The Devil struck me. Let me kiss your hand.

*Consuelo*. No. [She thinks a while and sighs.]

*Baron* Do you think sometimes? What are you thinking about now, Consuelo?

*Consuelo* [with another sigh] I don't know why, I just felt sorry for Bezano [sighs again]. He is so nice to me when he teaches me . . . and he has such a tiny little room.

*Baron* [indignant] You were there?

*Consuelo* No. He told me about it. [Smiling] Do you hear the noise in there? That's He getting slapped. Poor thing. . . although I know it doesn't hurt, it's only make-believe. The intermission is coming soon.

[The BARON throws away his cigar, takes two quick steps forward, and falls on his knees before the girl.]

*Baron* Consuelo—

*Consuelo* Please, don't. Get up. Please leave my hand alone.

*Baron* Consuelo!

*Consuelo* [disgusted] Get up please, it's disgusting—you're so fat.

[The BARON gets up. Voices are heard near the door and in the ring. It is the intermission. The clowns come first, talking cheerfully and excitedly. He leads them, in his clown's dress, with painted eyebrows and white nose;

*the others are applauding him  
Voices of the actors calling  
"Bravo! He" Then come the  
actors and actresses, riding-mas-  
ters, and the rest, all in costume  
ZINIDA is not among them PAPA  
BRIQUET comes a little later]*

*Polly A hundred slaps! Bravo, He!*

*Jackson Not bad, not bad at all You'll  
make a career*

*Tilly He was the Professor to-day, and  
we were the students Here goes another!*

*[Gives him a clown's slap Laugh-  
ter All bid good evening to the  
BARON He is politely rude to  
these vagabonds who bore him,  
and remains silent They seem  
quite used to it Enter MANCINI  
He is the same, and with the  
same cane]*

*Mancini [shaking hands] What a suc-  
cess, Baron—and think of it—how the  
crowd does love slaps [Whispering] Your  
knees are dusty, Baron, brush them off  
The floor is very dirty in here [Aloud]  
Consuelo, dear child, how do you feel?  
[Goes over to his daughter Sound of  
laughing, chattering The waiters from the  
buffet in the lobby bring in soda and wine  
CONSUELO'S voice is heard]*

*Consuelo And where is Bezano?*

*He [bows before the baron, affecting in-  
timacy] You do not recognize me, Baron?*

*Baron Yes I do You are the clown,  
He*

*He Yes I am He Who Gets Slapped  
May I presume to ask you, Baron, did you  
get your jewels back?*

*Baron What!*

*He I was asked to return some jewels  
to you, and I take the liberty of —*

*[The BARON turns his back on him  
—He laughs loudly]*

*Jackson Whiskey and soda! Believe  
me, ladies and gents, He will surely make  
a career I am an old clown, and I know  
the crowd Why to-day, he even eclipsed  
me—and clouds have covered my Sun  
[Striking it] They do not like puzzles,  
they want slaps! They are longing for  
them and dreaming about them in their  
homes Your health, He! Another whiskey  
and soda! He got so many slaps to-day,  
there would be enough to go round the  
whole orchestra!*

*Tilly I bet there wouldn't! [To JACK-  
SON] Shake!*

*Polly I bet there wouldn't—I'll go and  
count the old mugs*

*A Voice The orchestra did not laugh —*

*Jackson Because they were getting it,  
but the galleries did, because they were  
looking at the orchestra getting slapped  
Your health, He!*

*He Yours, Jim! Tell me, why didn't  
you let me finish my speech—I was just  
getting a good start*

*Jackson [seriously] My friend, because  
your speech was a sacrilege Politics—all  
right Manners—as much as you want But  
Providence—leave it in peace And be-  
lieve me, friend, I shut your mouth in  
time Didn't I, Papa Briquet?*

*Briquet [coming nearer] Yes It was  
too much like literature This is not an  
academy You forget yourself, He*

*Tilly But to shut one's mouth—  
laugh .*

*Briquet [in a didactic tone] Whenever  
one shuts one's mouth, it is always high  
time to shut it, unless one is drinking  
Hey, whiskey and soda!*

*Voices Whiskey and soda for the Man-  
ager!*

*Mancini But this is obscurantism Philos-  
ophizing again, Briquet?*

*Briquet I am not satisfied with you  
to-day, He Why do you tease them? They  
don't like it Your health! A good slap  
must be clean like a crystal—fit-fit! Right  
side, left side, and done with it They will  
like it, they will laugh, and love you But  
in your slaps there is a certain bite, you  
understand, a certain smell —*

*He But they laughed, nevertheless!*

*Briquet But without pleasure, without  
pleasure, He You pay, and immediately  
draw a draft on their bank, it's not the  
right game—they won't like you*

*Jackson That's what I tell him He had  
already begun to make them angry*

*Bezano [entering] Consuelo, where are  
you? I have been looking for you—come  
on [Both go out The BARON, after hesi-  
tating a while, follows them MANCINI ac-  
companies him respectfully to the door]*

*He [sighs] You don't understand, my  
dear friends, you are simply old, and have  
forgotten the smell of the stage*

Jackson. Aha! Who is old, my young man?

He Don't be angry, Jim. It's a play, don't you understand? I become happy when I enter the ring and hear the music I wear a mask and I feel humorous There is a mask on my face, and I play I may say *anything* like a drunkard Do you understand? Yesterday when I, with this stupid face, was playing the great man, the philosopher [*he assumes a proud monumental pose, and repeats the gesture of the play—general laughter*], I was walking this way, and was telling how great, how wise, how incomparable I was—how God lived in me, how high I stood above the earth—how glory shone above my head [*his voice changes and he is speaking faster*], then you, Jim, you hit me for the first time And I asked you "What is it, they're applauding me?" Then, at the tenth slap, I said "It seems to me that they sent for me from the Academy?" [*Acts, looking around him with an air of unconquerable pride and splendour Laughter Jackson gives him a real slap*]

He [*holding his face*] Why?

Jackson Because you're a fool, and play for nothing Waiter, the check

[*Laughter The bell calls them to the ring The actors go out in haste, some running The waiters collect their money*]

Briquet [*in a sing-song*] To the ring—to the ring—

Mancini I want to tell you something, He You are not going yet?

He No I'll take a rest

Briquet To the ring—to the ring—

[*The clowns as they go sing in shrill, squeaky voices Little by little they all disappear, and loud music begins He seats himself on the sofa with his legs crossed, and yawns*]

Mancini He, you have something none of my ancestors ever had—money. Let's have a nice bottle on you Waiter, please —[*The waiter, who was taking up dishes, brings a bottle of wine and glasses and goes out*]

He You're blue, Mancini [*Stretches*] Well, at my age, a hundred slaps—it seems pretty hard So you're blue How are things getting on with your girl?

Mancini Tss! Bad! Complications—parents—[*shudders*]. Ah—

He Prison!

Mancini [*laughing*] Prison! Mustn't I uphold the glory of my name now, eh? He, I'm joking—but there is Hell in my heart You're the only one who understands me But tell me how to explain this passion. It will turn my hair grey, it'll bring me to prison, to the grave I am a tragic man, He—[*Wipes his eyes with a dirty handkerchief*] Why don't I like things which are not forbidden? Why, at all moments, even at the very moment of ecstasy, must I be reminded of some law?—it is stupid He, I am becoming an anarchist Good God—Count Mancini an anarchist That's the only thing I've missed

He Isn't there a way of settling it somehow?

Mancini. Is there a way of getting money, somehow?

He And the Baron?

Mancini Oh, yes! He's just waiting for it, the blood-sucker! He'll get what he's after Some day, you'll see me give him Consuelo for ten thousand francs, perhaps for five!

He Cheap.

Mancini Did I say it was anything else? Do I want to do it? But these bourgeois are strangling me, they've got me by the throat He, one can easily see that you're a gentleman, and of good society, you understand me—I showed you the jewels which I sent back to him—damn honesty—I didn't even dare change the stones, put false ones—

He Why?

Mancini It would have queered the game Do you think he didn't weigh the diamonds when he got them back?

He He will not marry her

Mancini Yes he will You don't understand [*Laughs*] The first half of his life, this man had only appetites—now love's got him If he does not get Consuelo, he is lost, he is—like a withered narcissus Plague take him with his automobiles Did you see his car?

He I did . . . Give Consuelo to the Jockey—

Mancini To Bezano? [*Laughs*] What nonsense you do talk! Oh, I know. It's



your joke about Adam and Eve But please stop it It's clever, but it compromises the child She told me about it

*He* Or give her to me

*Mancini* Have you a billion? [*Laughs*] Ah, He, I'm not in the proper mood to listen to your clownish jokes— They say there are terrible jails in this country, and no discriminations are being made between people of my kind, and plain scoundrels Why do you look at me like that? You're making fun of me?

*He* No

*Mancini* I'll never get accustomed to those faces You're so disgustingly made up

*He* He will not marry her You can be as proud as you please, Mancini, but he'll not marry her What is Consuelo? She is not educated. When she is off her horse, any good housemaid from a decent house has nicer manners, and speaks better [*Nonchalantly*] Don't you think she's stupid?

*Mancini* No, she's not stupid And you, He, are a fool What need has a woman of intelligence? Why, He, you astonish me Consuelo is an unpolished jewel, and only a real donkey does not notice her sparkle Do you know what happened? I tried to begin to polish her—

*He* Yes, you took a teacher And what happened?

*Mancini* [*nodding his head*] I was frightened—it went too fast—I had to dismiss him Another month or two, and she would have kicked me out [*Laughs*] The clever old diamond merchants of Amsterdam keep their precious stones unpolished, and fool the thieves My father taught me that

*He* The sleep of a diamond It is only sleeping, then You are wise, Mancini

*Mancini* Do you know what blood flows in the veins of an Italian woman? The blood of Hannibal and Corsini—of a Borgia—and of a dirty Lombard peasant—and of a Moor Oh! an Italian woman is not of a lower race, with only peasants and gypsies behind her All possibilities, all forms are included in her, as in our marvelous sculpture Do you understand that, you fool? Strike here—out springs a washerwoman, or a cheap street girl whom you want to throw out, because she is sloppy and has a screechy voice Strike there—

but carefully and gently, for there stands a queen, a goddess, the Venus of the Capitol, who sings like a Stradivarius and makes you cry, idiot! An Italian woman—

*He* You're quite a poet, Mancini! But what will the Baron make of her?

*Mancini* What? What? Make of her? A baroness, you fool! What are you laughing at? I don't get you? But I am happy that this lovesick beast is neither a duke nor a prince—or she would be a princess and I—what would become of me? A year after the wedding they would not let me even into the kitchen [*laughing*] not even into the kitchen! I, Count Mancini, and she a—a simple—

*He* [*jumping up*] What did you say? You are not her father, Mancini?

*Mancini* Tss—the devil—I am so nervous to-day! Heavens, who do you think I am? "Her father?" Of course [*tries to laugh*], how silly you are—haven't you noticed the family resemblance? Just look, the nose, the eyes—[*Suddenly sighs deeply*] Ah, He! How unhappy I am! Think of it Here I am, a gentleman, nearly beaten in my struggle to keep up the honour of my name, of an old house, while there in the parquet—there sits that beast, an elephant with the eyes of a spider and he looks at Consuelo . and

*He* Yes, yes, he has the motionless stare of a spider—you're right!

*Mancini* Just what I say—a spider! But I must, I shall compel him to marry her You'll see—[*Walking excitedly up and down, playing with his cane*] You'll see! All my life I've been getting ready for this battle [*He continues to walk up and down* Silence Outside, great stillness]

*He* [*listening*] Why is it so quiet out there? What a strange silence

*Mancini* [*disgusted*] I don't know Out there it is quiet—but here [*touching his forehead with his cane*], here is storm, whirlwind [*Bends over the clown*] He, shall I tell you a strange thing—an unusual trick of nature? [*Laughs, and looks very important*] For three centuries the Counts Mancini have had no children! [*Laughs*]

*He* Then how were you born?

*Mancini* Sh! Silence! That is the secret of our sainted mothers! Ha-ha! We are too ancient a stock—too exquisitely refined to trouble ourselves with such things



—matters in which a peasant is more competent than ourselves [*Enter an usher*] What do you want? The manager is on the stage

*The Usher* [bows]. Yes, sir Baron Regnard wished me to give you this letter

*Mancini* The Baron? Is he there?

*The Usher* Baron Regnard has left There is no answer.

*Mancini* [opening the envelope, his hand shaking] The devil—the devil!

[*The usher is going*]

*He* Just a minute Why is there no music? This silence . .

*The Usher.* It is the act with Madame Zinida and her lions [*He goes Mancini is reading the BARON'S note for the second time*]

*He* What's the matter, Mancini? You shine like Jackson's sun

*Mancini* What's the matter, did you ask? What's the matter? What's the matter? [*Balancing his cane, he takes steps like a ballet-dancer*]

*He* Mancini! [*MANCINI rolls his eyes, makes faces, dances*] Speak, you beast!

*Mancini* [*holds out his hand*]. Give me ten francs! Quick—ten francs—here, come on [*Puts it automatically into his vest pocket*] Listen, He! If in a month I don't have a car of my own, you may give me one of your slaps!

*He* What! He's going to marry? He's decided?

*Mancini* What do you mean by "decided"? [*Laughs*] When a man has the rope about his neck, you don't ask him about his health! Baron— [*Stops suddenly, startled Briquet is staggering in like a drunken man, his hand over his eyes*]

*He* [*goes to him, touches his shoulder gently*] What is the matter, Papa Briquet? Tell me!

*Briquet* [*groaning*]. Oh, oh, I can't . . . I can't . Ah—

*He* Something has happened? You are ill? Please speak

*Briquet* I can't look at it! [*Takes his hands from his eyes, opens them wide*] Why does she do it? Ah, ah, why does she do it? She must be taken away, she is insane I couldn't look at it [*Shivers*]

They will tear her to pieces, He—her lions—they will tear her—

*Mancini* Go on, Briquet She is always like that You act like a child You ought to be ashamed

*Briquet* No— To-day she is mad! And what is the matter with the crowd? They are all like dead people—they're not even breathing I couldn't stand it Listen—what's that? [*All listen There is the same silence*]

*Mancini* [*disturbed*] I'll go and see

*Briquet* [*yelling*] No! Don't! You can't look—damned profession! Don't go You will scorch her—every pair of eyes that looks at her—at her lions—no, no It is impossible—it is a sacrilege I ran away . He, they will tear her—

*He* [*tries to be cheerful*]. Keep cool, Papa Briquet—I had no idea you were such a coward You ought to be ashamed Have a drink Mancini, give him some wine

*Briquet* I don't want any Heavens, if it were only over— [*All listen*] I have seen many things in my life, but this . . Oh, she is crazy

[*All still listen Suddenly the silence breaks, like a huge stone wall crashing There is a thunder of applause, mixed with shouts, music, wild screams—half bestial, half human The men give way, relieved Briquet sinks to a seat*]

*Mancini* [*nervous*]. You see—you see—you old fool!

*Briquet* [*sobs and laughs*]. I am not going to allow it any more!

*He.* Here she is!

[*ZINIDA walks in, alone She looks like a drunken bacchante, or like a mad woman Her hair falls over her shoulders dishevelled, one shoulder is uncovered She walks unseeing, though her eyes glow She is like the living statue of a mad Victory Behind her comes an actor, very pale, then two clowns, and a little later CONSUELO and BEZANO All look at ZINIDA fearfully, as if they were afraid of a touch of her hand, or her great eyes*]

*Briquet* [*shouting*] You are crazy—you're a mad woman!

Zimda I? No Did you see? Did you see? Well? [*She stands smiling, with the expression of a mad Victory*]

Tilly [*plaintively*] Cut it out, Zimda Go to the devil!

Zimda You saw, too! And! what—

Briquet Come home—come home [*To the others*] You can do what you like here Zimda, come home

Polly You can't go, Papa There's still your number

Zimda [*her eyes meet those of BEZANO*] Ah! Bezano [*Laughs long and happily*] Bezano! Alfred! Did you see? My lions do love me! [*BEZANO, without answering, leaves the stage ZINIDA seems to wither and grow dim, as a light being extinguished Her smile fades, her eyes and face grow pale, Briquet anxiously bends over her*]

Briquet [*in a slow voice*] A chair!

[*ZINIDA sits Her head drops on her shoulder, her arms fall, she begins to shiver and tremble Some one calls, "cognac"—an actor runs to get it*]

Briquet [*helpless*] What is the matter, Zimda darling?

Mancini [*running about*] She must quiet down Get out, get out—vagabonds! I'll fix everything, Papa Briquet The wrap—where's the wrap? She's cold [*A clown hands it to him, they cover her*]

Tilly [*timidly*] Wouldn't you like some moosic?

Mancini [*giving her some cognac*] Drink, Duchess, drink! Drink it all—that's it

[*ZINIDA drinks it like water, evidently not noticing the taste She shivers The clowns disappear one by one CONSUELO, with a sudden flexible movement, falls on her knees before ZINIDA and kisses her hands, warming them between her own*]

Consuelo Dear, dear, you are cold! Poor little hands, dear good one, beloved one—

Zimda [*pushes her away, gently*] Ho—home It will soon be over It's nothing

I am ver—very home You stay here, Briquet—you must I'm all right

Consuelo. You are cold? Here is my shawl

Zimda No—let me [*CONSUELO gets up, and moves aside*]

Briquet And it's all because of your books, Zimda—your mythology Now tell me, why do you want those beasts to love you? Beasts! Do you understand, He? You too, you're from that world She'll listen more to you Explain it to her Whom can those beasts love? Those hairy monsters, with diabolic eyes?

He [*genially*] I believe—only their equals You are right, Papa Briquet—they must be the same race

Briquet Of course, and this is all nonsense—literature Explain it to her, He

He [*takes on a meditative air*] Yes, you are right, Briquet

Briquet You see, dear, silly woman—everybody agrees

Mancini Oh! Briquet, you make me sick, you are an absolute despot, an Asiatic

Zimda [*with the shadow of a smile, gives her hand to be kissed*] Calm yourself, Louis It is over—I am going home [*She stands up, shaking, still chilled*]

Briquet But how? alone, dear?

Mancini What! fool! Did you imagine that Count Mancini would leave a woman when she needed help? I shall take her home—let your brutal heart be at rest—I shall take her home Thomas, run for an automobile Don't push me Briquet, you are as awkward as a unicorn . . . that's the way, that's the way—

[*They are holding her, guiding her slowly toward the door CONSUELO, her chin resting in her hand, is following them with her eyes Unconsciously she assumes a somewhat affected pose*]

Mancini I'll come back for you, child—

[*Only HE and CONSUELO are left on the stage In the ring, music, shrieks, and laughter begin again*]

He Consuelo—

Consuelo Is that you, He, dear?

He Where did you learn that pose? I have seen it only in marble You look like Psyche

Consuelo I don't know, He [*She sighs and sits on the sofa, keeping in her pose the same artificiality and beauty*] It's all so sad here, to-day He, are you sorry for Zimda?

He What did she do?

Consuelo I didn't see I had closed my

eyes, and didn't open them. Alfred says she is a wicked woman, but that isn't true. She has such nice eyes, and what tiny cold hands—as if she were dead. What does she do it for? Alfred says she should be audacious, beautiful, but quiet, otherwise what she does is only disgusting. It isn't true, is it, He?

*He* She loves Alfred.

*Consuelo* Alfred? My Bezano? [*Shrugging her shoulders, and surprised*] How does she love him? The same as everyone loves?

*He* Yes—as everyone loves—or still more

*Consuelo* Bezano? Bezano? No—it's nonsense [*Pause; silence*] What a beautiful costume you have, He. You invented it yourself?

*He* Jim helped me.

*Consuelo* Jim is so nice! All clowns are nice.

*He*. I am wicked

*Consuelo* [*laughs*]. You? You are the nicest of all. Oh, goodness! Three acts more! This is the second on now. Alfred and I are in the third. Are you coming to see me?

*He* I always do. How beautiful you are, Consuelo

*Consuelo* Like Eve? [*Smiles*]

*He* Yes, Consuelo. And if the Baron asks you to be his wife, will you accept?

*Consuelo* Certainly, He. That's all. Father and I are waiting for Father told me yesterday that the Baron will not hesitate very long. Of course I do not love him. But I will be his honest, faithful wife. Father wants to teach me to play the piano

*He* Are those your own words—"his honest, faithful wife"?

*Consuelo* Certainly they are mine. Whose could they be? He loves me so much, the poor thing. Dear He, what does "love" mean? Everybody speaks of love—love—Zinida, too! Poor Zinida! What a boring evening this has been. He, did you paint the laughter on your face yourself?

*He* My own self, dear little Consuelo—

*Consuelo* How do you do it, all of you? I tried once, but couldn't do a thing. Why are there no women clowns? Why are you so silent, He? You, too, are sad, to-night.

*He* No, I am happy to-night. Give me your hand, Consuelo, I want to see what it says

*Consuelo* Do you know how? What a talented man you are! Read it, but don't lie, like a gypsy. [*He goes down on one knee and takes her hand. Both bend over it*] Am I lucky?

*He* Yes, lucky. But wait a minute—this line here—funny. Ah, Consuelo, what does it say, here! [*Acting*] I tremble, my eyes do not dare to read the strange, fatal signs. Consuelo —

*Consuelo*. The stars are talking

*He* Yes, the stars are talking. Their voices are distant and terrible, their rays are pale, and their shadows slip by, like the ghosts of dead virgins—their spell is upon thee, Consuelo, beautiful Consuelo. Thou standest at the door of Eternity.

*Consuelo* I don't understand. Does it mean that I will live long?

*He* This line—how far it goes. Strange! Thou wilt live eternally, Consuelo

*Consuelo* You see, He, you did tell me a lie, just like a gypsy!

*He* But it is written—here, silly—and here. Now think of what the stars are saying. Here you have eternal life, love, and glory, and here, listen to what Jupiter says. He says "Goddess, thou must not belong to any one born on earth," and if you marry the Baron—you'll perish, you'll die, Consuelo. [*Consuelo laughs*]

*Consuelo* Will he eat me?

*He* No. But you will die before he has time to eat you

*Consuelo* And what will become of Father? Is there nothing about him here? [*Laughing, she softly sings the melody of the waltz, which is playing in the distance*]

*He* Don't laugh, Consuelo, at the voice of the stars. They are far away, their rays are light and pale, and we can barely see their sleeping shadows, but their sorcery is stern and dark. You stand at the gates of eternity. Your die is cast, you are doomed—and your Alfred, whom you love in your heart, even though your mind is not aware of it, your Alfred cannot save you. He, too, is a stranger on this earth. He is submerged in a deep sleep. He, too, is a little god who has lost himself, and Consuelo never, never will he find his way to Heaven again. Forget Bezano —

*Consuelo* I don't understand a word Do the gods really exist? My teacher told me about them But I thought it was all tales! [*Laughs*] And my Bezano is a god?

*He* Forget Bezano! Consuelo, do you know who can save you? The only one who can save you? —I

*Consuelo* [*laughing*] You, He?

*He* Yes, but don't laugh! Look Here is the letter H. It is I, He

*Consuelo* He Who Gets Slapped? Is that written here, too?

*He* That, too The stars know everything But look here, what more is written about him Consuelo, welcome him He is an old god in disguise, who came down to earth only to love you, foolish little Consuelo

*Consuelo* [*laughing and singing*] Some god!

*He* Don't mock! The gods don't like such empty laughter from beautiful lips The gods grow lonely and die, when they are not recognized Oh, Consuelo! Oh, great joy and love! Do recognize this god, and accept him Think a moment, one day a god suddenly went crazy!

*Consuelo* Gods go crazy, too?

*He* Yes, when they are half man, then they often go mad Suddenly he saw his own sublimity, and shuddered with horror, with infinite solitude, with superhuman anguish It is terrible, when anguish touches the divine soul!

*Consuelo* I don't like it What language are you speaking? I don't understand —

*He* I speak the language of thy awakening Consuelo, recognize and accept thy god, who was thrown down from the summit like a stone Accept the god who fell to the earth in order to live, to play, and to be infinitely drunk with joy Evoe, Goddess!

*Consuelo* [*tortured*] He—I cannot understand Let my hand alone

*He* [*stands up*] Sleep Then wake again, Consuelo! And when thou wakest—remember that hour when, covered with snow-white sea-foam, thou didst emerge from the sky-blue waters Remember Heaven, and the slow eastern wind, and the whisper of the foam at thy marble feet.

*Consuelo* [*her eyes are closed*] I believe —wait—I remember Remind me further—

[*He is bowed over CONSUELO, with lifted arms, he speaks slowly, but in a commanding voice, as if conjuring*]

*He* You see the waves playing Remember the song of the sirens, their sorrowless song of joy Their white bodies, shining blue through the blue waters Or can you hear the sun, singing? Like the strings of a divine harp, spread the golden rays— Do you not see the hand of God, which gives harmony, light, and love to the world? Do not the mountains, in the blue cloud of incense, sing their hymn of glory? Remember, O Consuelo, remember the prayer of the mountains, the prayer of the sea [*Silence*]

*He* [*commandingly*]. Remember—Consuelo!

*Consuelo* [*opening her eyes*] No! He, I was feeling so happy, and suddenly I forgot it all Yet something of it all is still in my heart Help me again, He, remind me It hurts, I hear so many voices They all sing "Consuelo—Consuelo" What comes after? [*Silence, pause*] What comes after? It hurts Remind me, He [*Silence—in the ring, the music suddenly bursts forth in a tempestuous circus gallop Silence*] He, [*opens her eyes and smiles*] that's Alfred galloping Do you recognize his music?

*He* [*with rage*] Leave the boy alone! [*Suddenly falls on his knees before CONSUELO*] I love you, Consuelo, revelation of my heart, light of my nights, I love you, Consuelo [*Looks at her in ecstacy and tears—and gets a slap, starting back*] What's this?

*Consuelo* A slap! You forget who you are [*Stands up, with anger in her eyes*] You are He Who Gets Slapped! Did you forget it? Some god! With such a face—slapped face! Was it with slaps they threw you down from heaven, god?

*He* Wait! Don't stand up! I—did not finish the play!

*Consuelo* [*sits*] Then you were playing?

*He* Wait! One minute

*Consuelo* You lied to me Why did you play so that I believed you?

*He* I am He Who Gets Slapped!

*Consuelo* You are not angry because I struck you? I did not want to really, but

you were so—disgusting And now you are so funny again You have great talent, HE—or are you drunk?

He Strike me again

Consuelo No

He I need it for my play Strike!

Consuelo [laughs, and touches his cheek with her fingertips] Here, then!

He Didn't you understand that you are a queen, and I a fool who is in love with his queen? Don't you know, Consuelo, that every queen has a fool, and he is always in love with her, and they always beat him for it HE Who Gets Slapped

Consuelo No I didn't know

He Yes, every queen Beauty has her fool Wisdom, too Oh, how many fools she has! Her court is overcrowded with enamoured fools, and the sound of slaps does not cease, even through the night But I never received such a sweet slap as the one given by my little queen [Someone appears at the door HE notices it, and continues to play, making many faces] Clown HE can have no rival! Who is there who could stand such a deluge of slaps, such a hail-storm of slaps, and not get soaked? [Feigns to cry aloud] "Have pity on me I am but a poor fool!"

[Enter two men an actor, dressed as a bareback rider, and a gentleman from the audience He is spare, dressed in black, very respectable He carries his hat in his hand]

Consuelo [laughing, embarrassed] HE, there is someone here Stop!

He [gets up] Who is it? Who dares to intrude in the castle of my queen? [HE stops, suddenly CONSUELO, laughing, jumps up and runs away, after a quick glance at the gentleman]

Consuelo You cheered me up, HE Good-bye [At the door] You shall get a note to-morrow

The Bareback Rider [laughing] A jolly fellow, sir You wanted to see him? There he is HE, the gentleman wants to see you

He [in a depressed voice] What can I do for you?

[The actor bows, and goes away, smiling Both men take a step toward each other]

Gentleman Is this you?

He Yes! It is I And you? [Silence]

Gentleman Must I believe my eyes? Is this you, Mr —

He [in a rage] My name here is HE I have no other name, do you hear? HE Who Gets Slapped And if you want to stay here, don't forget it

Gentleman You are so familiar As far as I can remember—

He We are all familiar, here [Contemptuously] Besides, that's all you deserve, anywhere

Gentleman [humbly] You have not forgiven me, HE? [Silence]

He Are you here with my wife? Is she too in the circus?

Gentleman [quickly] Oh, no! I am alone She stayed there!

He You've left her already?

Gentleman [humbly] No—we have—a son After your sudden and mysterious disappearance—when you left that strange and insulting letter—

He [laughs] Insulting? You are still able to feel insults? What are you doing here? Were you looking for me, or is it an accident?

Gentleman I have been looking for you, for half a year—through many countries And suddenly, to-day—by accident, indeed—I had no acquaintances here, and I went to the circus We must talk things over HE, I implore you [Silence]

He Here is a shadow I cannot lose! To talk things over! Do you really think we still have something to talk over? All right Leave your address with the porter, and I will let you know when you can see me Now get out [Proudly] I am busy

[The GENTLEMAN bows and leaves

He does not return his bow, but stands with outstretched hand, in the pose of a great man, who shows a boring visitor the door]

### ACT THREE

The same room Morning, before the rehearsal HE is striding thoughtfully up and down the room He wears a broad, parti-coloured coat, and a prismatic tie His derby is on the back of his head, and his face is clean-shaven like that of an actor His eyebrows are drawn, lips pressed together energetically, his whole appearance severe and sombre After the entrance of

the GENTLEMAN he changes His face becomes clown-like, mobile—a living mask

The GENTLEMAN comes in He is dressed in black, and has an extremely well-bred appearance His thin face is yellowish, like an invalid's When he is upset, his colourless, dull eyes often twitch HE does not notice him

Gentleman Good morning, sir

He [turning around and looking at him absent-mindedly] Ah! It's you

Gentleman I am not late? You look as if you did not expect me I hope I am not disturbing you? You fixed this time yourself, however, and I took the liberty—

He No manners, please What do you want? Tell me quickly, I have no time

Gentleman [looking around with distaste] I expected you would invite me to some other place to your home

He I have no other home This is my home

Gentleman But people may disturb us here

He So much the worse for you Talk faster! [Silence]

Gentleman Will you allow me to sit down?

He Sit down Look out! That chair is broken

[The GENTLEMAN, afraid, pushes away the chair and looks helplessly around Everything here seems to him dangerous and strange He chooses an apparently solid little gilded dvan, and sits down, puts his silk hat aside, slowly takes off his gloves, which stick to his fingers HE observes him indifferently]

Gentleman In this suit, and with this face, you make a still stranger impression Yesterday it seemed to me that it was all a dream, to-day you .

He You have forgotten my name again? My name is HE

Gentleman You are determined to continue talking to me like this?

He Decidedly! But you are squandering your time like a millionaire Hurry up!

Gentleman I really don't know Everything here strikes me so These

posters, horses, animals, which I passed when I was looking for you And finally, you, a clown in a circus! [With a slight, deprecating smile] Could I expect it? It is true, when everybody there decided that you were dead, I was the only man who did not agree with them I felt that you were still alive But to find you among such surroundings—I can't understand it

He You said you have a son, now Doesn't he look like me?

Gentleman I don't understand

He Don't you know that widows or divorced women often have children by the new husband, which resemble the old one? This misfortune did not befall you? [Laughs] And your book, too, is a big success, I hear

Gentleman You want to insult me again?

He [laughing] What a restless, touchy faker you are! Please sit still, be quiet It is the custom here to speak this way Why were you trying to find me?

Gentleman My conscience

He You have no conscience Or were you afraid that you hadn't robbed me of everything I possessed, and you came for the rest? But what more could you take from me now? My fool's cap with its bells? You wouldn't take it It's too big for your bald head! Crawl back, you book-worm!

Gentleman You cannot forgive the fact that your wife

He To the devil with my wife! [The GENTLEMAN is startled and raises his eyebrows HE laughs]

Gentleman I don't know But such language! I confess I find difficulty in expressing my thoughts in such an atmosphere, but if you are so indifferent to your wife, who, I shall allow myself to emphasize the fact, loved you and thought you were a saint— [HE laughs] Then what brought you to such a step? Or is it that you cannot forgive me my success? A success, it is true, not entirely deserved And now you want to take vengeance, with your humbleness, on those who misunderstood you But you always were so indifferent to glory Or your indifference was only hypocrisy And when I, a more lucky rival

*He [with a burst of laughter].* Rival! You—a rival!

*Gentleman [growing pale]* But my book!

*He.* You are talking to me about your book? To me? [*The GENTLEMAN is very pale* *He looks at him with curiosity and mockery*]

*Gentleman [raising his eyes].* I am a very unhappy man.

*He* Why?

*Gentleman* I am a very unhappy man. You must forgive me I am deeply, irreparably, and infinitely unhappy

*He* But why? Explain it to me. [*Starts walking up and down*] You say yourself that your book is a tremendous success, you are famous, you have glory, there is not a yellow newspaper in which *you* and *your* thoughts are not mentioned Who knows *me*? Who cares about my heavy abstractions, from which it was difficult for them to derive a single thought? You—you are the great vulgarizer! You have made my thoughts comprehensible even to horses! With the art of a great vulgarizer, a tailor of ideas, you dressed my Apollo in a barber's jacket, you handed my Venus a yellow ticket, and to my bright hero you gave the ears of an ass And then your career is made, as Jackson says And wherever I go, the whole street looks at me with thousands of faces, in which—what mockery—I recognize the traits of my own children Oh! How ugly your son must be, if he resembles me! Why then are you unhappy, you poor devil? [*The GENTLEMAN bows his head, plucking at his gloves*] The police haven't caught you, as yet What am I talking about? Is it possible to catch you? You always keep within the limits of the law You have been torturing yourself up to now because you are not married to my wife A notary public is always present at your thefts What is the use of this self-torture, my friend? Get married I died. You are not satisfied with having taken only my wife? Let my glory remain in your possession It is yours Accept my ideas Assume all the rights, my most lawful heir! I died! And when I was dying [*making a stupidly pious face*] I forgave thee! [*Bursts out laughing* *The GENTLEMAN raises his head, and bending forward, looks straight into He's eyes*]

*Gentleman* And my pride?

*He* Have you any pride? [*The GENTLEMAN straightens up, and nods his head, silently*] Yes! But please stand off a little I don't like to look at you Think of it There was a time when I loved you a little, even thought you a little gifted! You—my empty shadow.

*Gentleman [nodding his head].* I am your shadow. [*He keeps on walking, and looks over his shoulder at the GENTLEMAN, with a smile*]

*He* Oh, you are marvellous! What a comedy! What a touching comedy! Listen Tell me frankly if you can; do you hate me very much?

*Gentleman* Yes! With all the hate there is in the world! Sit down here

*He* You order me?

*Gentleman* Sit down here. Thank you [*Bows*] I am respected and I am famous, yes? I have a wife and a son, yes? [*Laughs slowly*] My wife still loves you our favourite discussion is about your genius She supposes you are a genius We, I and she, love you even when we are in bed Tss! It is I who must make faces My son—yes, he'll resemble you And when, in order to have a little rest, I go to my desk, to my ink-pot, my books—there, too, I find you Always you! Everywhere you! And I am never alone—never myself and alone And when at night—you, sir, should understand this—when at night I go to my lonely thoughts, to my sleepless contemplations, even then I find your image in my head, in my unfortunate brain, your damned and hateful image! [*Silence* *The GENTLEMAN's eyes twitch*]

*He [speaking slowly]* What a comedy How marvellously everything is turned about in this world the robbed proves to be robber, and the robber is complaining of theft, and cursing! [*Laughs*] Listen, I was mistaken You are not my shadow You are the crowd If you live by my creations, you hate me; if you breathe my breath, you are choking with anger And choking with anger, hating me, you still walk slowly on the trail of my ideas But you are advancing backward, advancing backward, comrade Oh, what a marvellous comedy! [*Walking and smiling*] Tell me, would you be relieved if I really had died?



*Gentleman* Yes! I think so Death augments distance and dulls the memory Death reconciles But you do not look like a man who—

*He* Yes, yes! Death, *certainly!*

*Gentleman* Sit down here

*He* Your obedient servant Yes?

*Gentleman* Certainly, I do not dare to ask you—[*makes a grimace*] to ask you to die, but tell me you'll never come back there? No, don't laugh If you want me to, I'll kiss your hand Don't grimace! I would have done so if you had died

*He* [*slowly*] Get out, vermin!

[*Enter TILLY and POLLY as in the first act, playing For a long time they do not see the two men*]

*He* Jack!

*Tilly* Ah! Good morning, *He* We are rehearsing You know it is very hard Jack has just about as much music in his head as my pig

*He* [*introducing, nonchalantly*] My friend . For the benefit performance?

[*The clowns bow to the GENTLEMAN, making idiotic faces*]

*Polly* Yes What are you preparing? You are cunning, *He*! Consuelo told me what you are preparing for the benefit performance She leaves us soon, you know?

*He* Is that so?

*Tilly* Zúrida told us Do you think she would get a benefit performance otherwise? She is a nice girl

*Polly* [*taking his small flute-pipe*] Here! Don't walk as if you were an elephant Don't forget you are an ant! Come on!

[*They go off, playing*]

*Gentleman* [*smiling*] These are your new comrades? How strange they are!

*He* Everything here is strange

*Gentleman* This suit of yours Black used to be very becoming to you This one hurts the eyes

*He* [*looking himself over*] Why? It looks very nice The rehearsal has begun You must go away. You are disturbing us

*Gentleman* You did not answer my question

[*Slow strains of the Tango from a small orchestra in the ring*]

*He* [*listening absent-mindedly to the music*] What question?

*Gentleman* [*who does not hear the music*] I pray you tell me will you ever come back?

*He* [*listening to the music*] Never, never, never!

*Gentleman* [*getting up*] Thank you I am going

*He* Never, never, never! Yes, run along And don't come back There, you were still bearable and useful for something, but here you are superfluous

*Gentleman* But if something should happen to you you are a healthy man, but in this environment, these people how will I know? They don't know your name here?

*He* My name here is unknown, but you will know Anything else?

*Gentleman* I can be at peace? On your word of honour? Of course I mean, comparatively, at peace?

*He* Yes, you may be comparatively at peace Never! [*They walk to the door, the GENTLEMAN stops*]

*Gentleman* May I come to the circus? You will allow me?

*He* Certainly You are the audience! [*Laughs*] But I shan't give you my card for a pass But why do you want to come? Or do you like the circus so much, and since when?

*Gentleman* I want to look at you some more, and to understand, perhaps Such a transformation! Knowing you as I do, I cannot admit that you are here without any idea But what idea? [*Looks short-sightedly at He He grimaces and thumbs his nose*]

*Gentleman* What is that?

*He* My idea! Good-bye, Prince! My regards to your respected wife, your Highness' wonderful son!

[*Enter MANCINI*]

*Mancini* You positively live in the circus, *He* Whenever I come, you are here. You are a fanatic in your work, sir

*He* [*introducing*] Prince Pomiatovsky, Count Mancini

*Mancini* [*drawing himself up*] Very, very glad And you too, Prince, you know my queer fellow? What a nice face he has, hasn't he? [*He touches He's shoulder patronizingly, with the tip of his cane*]

*Gentleman* [*awkwardly*] Yes, I have the pleasure . . . certainly Good-bye, Count



*Mancini* Good-day, Prince

*He* [*accompanying him*] Look out, your Highness, for the dark passages! the steps are so rotten. Unfortunately I cannot usher you out to the street

*Gentleman* [*in a low voice*]. You will not give me your hand when we say good-bye? We are parting for ever

*He* Unnecessary, Prince. I shall still hope to meet you in the Kingdom of Heaven. I trust you will be there, too?

*Gentleman* [*with disgust*] How you did succeed! You have so much of the clown in you!

*He* I am HE Who is Getting Slapped. Good-bye, Prince. [*They take another step*]

*Gentleman* [*looking HE in the eyes; in a very low voice*] Tell me, you are not mad?

*He* [*just as low, his eyes wide open*] I am afraid, I am afraid you are right, Prince. [*Still low*] Ass! Never in your life did you use such a precise expression. I am mad! [*Playing the clown again, HE shows him to the stair, with a big, affected gesture, a sweep of the hand and arm from his head to the floor, the fingers moving, to represent the steps*]

*He* [*laughing*] He is down! *Au revoir*, Prince. [*The GENTLEMAN goes out. HE comes skipping back, and takes a pose*] *Mancini*! Let us dance the Tango! *Mancini*, I adore you!

*Mancini* [*sitting back comfortably and playing with his cane*]. Don't forget yourself, HE. But you're hiding something, my boy. I always said you used to belong to society. It is so easy to talk to you. And who is this Prince? A genuine one?

*He* Genuine. A first rater. Like you!

*Mancini* A sympathetic face. Although at first I thought he was an undertaker who came for an order. Ah, HE! When shall I finally depart from these dirty walls, from Papa Briquet, stupid posters, and brutal jockeys!

*He* Very soon, *Mancini*!

*Mancini* Yes, soon. I am simply exhausted in these surroundings, HE! I begin to feel myself a horse. You are from society, still you don't yet know what high society means. To be at last decently dressed, to attend receptions, to display the splendour of wit, from time to time to

have a game of baccarat [*laughing*] without tricks or cheating —

*He* And when evening comes, go to a suburb, where you are considered an honest father, who loves his children and —

*Mancini* And get hold of something, eh? [*Laughs*] I shall wear a silk mask and two butlers shall follow me, thus protecting me from the dirty crowd. Ah, HE! The blood of my ancestors boils in me. Look at this stiletto. What do you think? Do you think that it was ever stained with blood?

*He* You frighten me, Count!

*Mancini* [*laughing, and putting the stiletto back into its sheath*] Fool!

*He* And what about the girl?

*Mancini* Tss! I give those bourgeois absolute satisfaction, and they glorify my name. [*Laughs*] The splendour of my name is beginning to shine with a force unknown. By the way, do you know what automobile firms are the best? Money is no object. [*Laughs*] Ah! Papa Briquet.

[*Enter BRIQUET in his overcoat and silk hat. They shake hands*]

*Briquet* So, *Mancini*, you have obtained a benefit performance for your daughter, Consuelo! I only want to tell you, that if it were not for Zimda .

*Mancini* Listen, *Briquet*. Decidedly you are a donkey. What are you complaining of? The Baron has bought all the parquet seats for Consuelo's benefit performance. Isn't that enough for you, you miser?

*Briquet* I love your daughter, *Mancini*, and I am sorry to let her go. What more does she need here? She has an honest job, wonderful comrades, and the atmosphere —?

*Mancini* Not she, but I need something. You understand? [*Laughs*] I asked you to increase her salary, Harpagon! and now, Mr Manager, wouldn't you like to change me a thousand-franc note?

*Briquet* [*with a sigh*] Give it to me.

*Mancini* [*nonchalantly*]. To-morrow I left it at home. [*All three laugh*] Laugh, laugh! To-day we are going with the Baron to his villa in the country; people say a very nice villa.

*He* What for?

*Mancini* You know, HE, the crazes of these billionaires. HE wants to show Con-

suelo some winter roses, and me his wine cellars He will come for us here What is the matter, my little Consuelo?

[Enter CONSUELO, almost crying]

Consuelo I can't, father! Tell him! What right has he to yell at me? He almost hit me with his whip!

Mancini [straightening up] Briquet! I beg of you, as the Manager, what is this—a stable? To hit my daughter with a whip! I'll show this cub a mere jockey No, the devil knows what it is, devil knows, I swear

Consuelo Father

Briquet I will tell him

Consuelo Please don't Alfred didn't hit me It's a silly thing, what I told you What an idea! He is so sorry himself

Briquet I shall tell him anyhow that—

Consuelo Don't you dare You mustn't tell him anything He didn't do a thing

Mancini [still excited] He must beg her pardon, the brat

Consuelo He's already asked me to forgive him How silly you all are! I simply cannot work to-day and I got nervous What nonsense! The silly boy asked me to forgive him, but I didn't want to He, dear, good morning! I didn't notice you How becoming your tie is! Where are you going, Briquet? To Alfred?

Briquet No, I am going home, dear child Zimida asked me to give you her love She will not be here to-day, either [He goes out]

Consuelo Zimida is so nice, so good Father, why is it that everybody seems so nice to me? Probably because I am going away soon He, did you hear the march that Tilly and Polly will play? [Laughs] Such a cheerful one

He Yes I heard it Your benefit performance will be remarkable

Consuelo I think so, too Father I am hungry Have them bring me a sandwich

He I'll run for it, my Queen

Consuelo Please do, He [Loudly] But not cheese I don't like it

[MANCINI and CONSUELO are alone

MANCINI, lying back comfortably in an armchair, scrutinizes his daughter with a searching eye]

Mancini I find something particular in you to-day my child I don't know

whether it is something better or worse You cried?

Consuelo Yes, a little. Oh, I am so hungry

Mancini But you had your breakfast?

Consuelo No I didn't That's why I am so hungry You again forgot to leave me some money this morning, and without money

Mancini Oh, the devil . . . what a memory I have [Laughs] But we shall have a very nice meal to-day Don't eat very many sandwiches Yes, positively I like you You must cry more often, my child, it washes off your superfluous simplicity You become more of a woman

Consuelo Am I so simple, Father?

Mancini Very Too much I like it in others, but not in you Besides, the Baron

Consuelo Nonsense I am not simple But you know, Bezano scolded me so much, that even you would have cried The devil knows

Mancini Tss Never say "the devil knows" It isn't decent

Consuelo I say it only when I am with you

Mancini You must not say it when you are with me, either I know it without you [Laughs]

Consuelo Ha! Listen, Father! It's a new number of Alfred's He makes such a jump! Jim says he's bound to break his neck Poor fish

Mancini [indifferently] Or his leg, or his back, they all have to break something [Laughs] They are breakable toys

Consuelo [listening to the music] I'll be lonesome without them, Father! The Baron promised to make a ring for me to gallop over as much as I want He's not lying?

Mancini A ring? [Laughs] No, it's not a lie By the way, child, when speaking of Barons, you must say, "he does not tell the truth," and not, "he lies"

Consuelo It's just the same It's nice to be wealthy, Father, you can do what you want, then

Mancini [with enthusiasm] Everything you want Everything, my child Ah! Our fate is being decided to-day Pray

our clement God, Consuelo The Baron is hanging on a thread

*Consuelo [indifferently]* Yes?

*Mancini [making the gesture with his fingers]* On a very thin, silk thread I am almost sure that he will make his proposal to-day [*Laughs*] Winter roses, and the web of a spider amongst the roses, in order that my dear little fly . . . He is such a spider

*Consuelo [indifferently]* Yes, a terrible spider Father, oughtn't I to let him kiss my hand yet?

*Mancini* By no means You don't know yet, darling, what these men are

*Consuelo* Alfred never kisses

*Mancini* Alfred! Your Alfred is a cub, and he mustn't dare But with men of that sort, you must be extremely careful, my child To-day he would kiss your little finger, to-morrow your hand, and after to-morrow you would be on his lap

*Consuelo* Foul! Father, what are you talking about? You should be ashamed!

*Mancini* But I know . . .

*Consuelo* Don't you dare! I don't want to hear such dirty things I shall give the Baron such a slap! A better one than He—let him only try

*Mancini [with a deprecating gesture].* All men are like that, child

*Consuelo* It isn't true Alfred is not. Ah! But where is He? He said he'd run, and he hasn't come back

*Mancini* The buffet here is closed, and he has to get the sandwiches somewhere else. Consuelo, as your father, I want to warn you about He. Don't trust him He knows something [*Twirls his finger close to his forehead*] His game is not fair

*Consuelo* You say it about everybody I know He, he is such a nice man, and he loves me so much

*Mancini* Believe me, there is something in it

*Consuelo* Father, you make me sick with your advice Ah! He, thank you

[*He, breathing somewhat heavily, enters and gives her the sandwiches*]

*He* Eat, Consuelo

*Consuelo* A hot one . But you were running, He? I am so grateful [*Eats*] He, do you love me?

*He.* I do, my Queen. I am your court fool

*Consuelo [eating].* And when I leave, will you find another queen?

*He [making a ceremonious bow].* I shall follow after you, my incomparable one I shall carry the train of your dress and wipe away my tears with it [*Pretends to cry*]

*Mancini* Idiot! [*Laughs*] How sorry I am, He, that those wonderful times have passed, when, in the court of the Counts Mancini, there were scores of motley fools who were given gold and kicks . . . Now, Mancini is compelled to go to this dirty circus in order to see a good fool, and still, whose fool is he? Mine? No He belongs to everybody who pays a franc We shall very soon be unable to breathe because of Democracy Democracy, too, needs fools! Think of it, He, what an unexampled impertinence

*He* We are the servants of those who pay But how can we help it, Count?

*Mancini* But is that not sad? Imagine. we are in my castle I, near the fireplace with my glass of wine, you, at my feet chattering your nonsense, jingling your little bells—diverting me Sometimes you pinch me too with your jokes it is allowed by the traditions and necessary for the circulation of the blood After a while—I am sick of you, I want another one . Then I give you a kick and . . . Ah, He, how wonderful it would be!

*He* It would be marvellous, Mancini!

*Mancini* Yes Certainly! You would be getting gold coins, those wonderfully little yellow things . . . Well, when I become rich, I shall take you That's settled.

*Consuelo* Take him, Father . .

*He* And when the Count, tired of my chattering, will give me a kick with his Highness's foot, then I shall lie down at the little feet of my queen, and shall

*Consuelo [laughing]* Wait for another kick? I'm finished Father, give me your handkerchief, I want to wipe my hands You have another one in your pocket Oh, my goodness, I must work some more!

*Mancini [uneasy]* But don't forget, my child!

*Consuelo* No, to-day I won't forget! Go on!

*Mancini [looking at his watch]* Yes, it

is time He asked me to come over when you were ready You must change your dress before I come back [*Laughing*] *Signori, miei complimenti*

[*He goes out, playing with his cane*  
CONSUELO sits on the corner of the divan, and covers herself with her shawl]

Consuelo Hello, HE Come and lie down at my feet, and tell me something cheerful

You know, when you paint the laughter on your face, you are very good looking, but now, too, you are very, very nice Come on, HE, why don't you lie down?

He Consuelo! Are you going to marry the Baron?

Consuelo [*indifferently*] It seems so The Baron is hanging by a thread! HE, there is one little sandwich left Eat it

He Thank you, my queen [*Eats*] And do you remember my prediction?

Consuelo What prediction? How quickly you swallow! Does it taste good?

He Very good That if you marry the Baron, you .

Consuelo Oh, that's what you're talking about But you were making fun

He Nobody can tell, my queen Sometimes one makes fun, and suddenly it turns out to be true, the stars never talk in vain If sometimes it is difficult for a human being to open his mouth and to say a word, how difficult it must be for a star Think of it

Consuelo [*laughing*] I should say Such a mouth! [*Makes a tiny mouth*]

He No, my dear little girl, were I in your place, I would think it over And suppose suddenly you should die? Don't marry the Baron, Consuelo!

Consuelo [*thinking*] And what is—death?

He I do not know, my Queen Nobody knows Like love! Nobody knows But your little hands will become cold, and your dear little eyes will be closed You will be away from here And the music will play without you, and without you the crazy Bezano will be galloping, and Tilly and Polly will be playing on their pipes without you tilly-polly, tilly-polly . tilly-tilly, polly-polly

Consuelo Please don't, HE darling—I am so sad, anyway tilly-tilly, polly-polly

[*Silence* HE looks at CONSUELO]

He You were crying, my little Consuelo?

Consuelo Yes, a little Alfred made me nervous But tell me, is it my fault that I can't do anything to-day? I tried to, but I couldn't

He Why?

Consuelo Ah, I don't know There is something here [*Presses her hand against her heart*] I don't know HE, I must be sick What is sickness? Does it hurt very much?

He It is not sickness It is the charm of the far off stars, Consuelo It is the voice of your fate, my little Queen

Consuelo Don't talk nonsense, please What should the stars care about me? I am so small Nonsense, HE! Tell me rather another tale which you know about the blue sea and those gods, you know . who are so beautiful Did they all die?

He They are all alive, but they hide themselves, my goddess

Consuelo In the woods or mountains? Can one come across them? Ah, imagine, HE I come across a god, and he suddenly takes a look at me! I'd run away [*Laughs*] This morning when I went without breakfast, I became so sad, so disgusted, and I thought if a god should come, and give me something to eat! And as I thought it, I suddenly heard, honestly it's true, I heard "Consuelo, somebody's calling you" [*Angrily*] Don't you dare laugh!

He Am I laughing?

Consuelo Honestly, it's true Ah, HE, but he didn't come He only called me and disappeared, and how can you find him? It hurt me so much, and hurts even now Why did you remind me of my childhood? I'd forgotten it entirely There was the sea and something many, many

[*Closes her eyes, smiling*]

He Remember, Consuelo!

Consuelo No [*opening her eyes*] I forget everything about it [*Looks around the room*] HE, do you see what a poster they made for my benefit performance? It's Father's idea The Baron liked it [*HE laughs* Silence]

He [*slowly*] Consuelo, my Queen! Don't go to the Baron to-day.

Consuelo Why? [*After a silence*] How fresh you are, HE

*He [lowering his head, slowly]* I don't want it

*Consuelo [getting up].* What? You don't want it?

*He [bowing his head still lower]* I do not want you to marry the Baron [*Imploring*] I . . . I shall not allow it . . . I beg you!

*Consuelo* Whom, then, would you ask me to marry? You, perhaps, you fool? [*with a rancorous laugh*] Are you crazy, my darling? "I shall not allow" He! He will not allow me! But it is unbearable! What business is it of yours? [*Walking up and down the room, looks over her shoulder at He, with anger*] Some fool clown, whom they can kick out of here any minute You make me sick with your stupid tales Or you like slaps so much Fool, you couldn't invent anything better than a slap!

*He [without lifting his head]* Forgive me, my queen.

*Consuelo* He is glad when they laugh at him Some god! No, I shan't forgive I know you [*Makes same gesture as Manzoni*] You have something there! Laughs . . . so nicely . . . plays, plays, and then suddenly—hop! *Obeys him!* No, darling, I am not that kind! Carry my train, that is your business—fool!

*He* I shall carry your train, my queen Forgive me Give me back the image of my beautiful, piteous goddess

*Consuelo [quieting down]* You're playing again?

*He* I am

*Consuelo [laughing].* You see! [*Sits down*] Foolish He.

*He* I see everything, my Queen I see how beautiful you are, and how low under your feet your poor court fool is lying Somewhere in the abyss his little bells are ringing He kneels before you and prays, forgive and pity him, my divine one He was too impudent, he played so cheerfully that he went too far and lost his tiny little mind, the last bit of understanding he had saved up Forgive me!

*Consuelo* All right I forgive you. [*Laughs*] And now will you allow me to marry the Baron?

*He [also laughing]* And nevertheless I will not allow it But what does a queen care about the permission of her enamoured fool?

*Consuelo* Get up You are forgiven And do you know why? You think because of your words? You are a cunning beast, He! No, because of the sandwiches That's why You were so lovely, you panted so when you brought them Poor darling He From to-morrow you may be at my feet again And as soon as I whistle, "tuwhoo"——

*He* I shall instantly lie down at thy feet, Consuelo It is settled! But all my little bells fell off to-day and——

[*BEZANO appears, confused*]

*Consuelo* Alfred! You came for me?

*Bezano* Yes Will you work some more, Consuelo?

*Consuelo.* Certainly As much as you want But I thought, Alfred, you were mad at me? I shan't dawdle any more

*Bezano* No You didn't dawdle Don't be offended because I yelled so much You know when one has to teach, and——

*Consuelo* My goodness, do you think I don't understand? You are too nice, unbearably nice, to like teaching such a fool as me Do you think I don't understand? Come on!

*Bezano* Come on! Hello, He! I haven't seen you yet to-day How are you?

*He* How are you, Bezano? Wait, wait a minute—stay here a minute, both of you—that way Yes!

[*CONSUELO and BEZANO stand side by side, the jockey scowling, CONSUELO laughing and flushing*]

*Consuelo* Like Adam and Eve? How foolish you are! Terribly. [*She runs away*] I shall only change my slippers, Alfred

*He* Consuelo! And how about Father and the Baron? They will come soon, to take you with them.

*Consuelo* Let them come They can wait Not very important people [*Runs away BEZANO hesitatingly follows her*]

*He* Stay here for a while, Bezano Sit down

*Bezano* What more do you want? I have no time for your nonsense

*He* You can remain standing if you want to Bezano—you love her? [*Silence*]

*Bezano* I shall allow nobody to interfere with my affairs You allow yourself too many liberties, He I don't know you You came from the street, and why should I trust you?

*He* But you know the Baron? Listen It is painful for me to pronounce these words she loves you Save her from the spider! Or are you blind, and don't see the web, which is woven in every dark corner Get out of the vicious circle in which you are turning around, like a blind man Take her away, steal her, do what you want kill her even, and take her to the heavens or to the devil! But don't give her to this man! He is a defiler of love And if you are timid, if you are afraid to lift your hand against her—kill the Baron! Kill!

*Bezano [with a smile]* And who will kill the others, to come?

*He* She loves you

*Bezano* Did she tell you that herself?

*He* What a petty, what a stupid, what a human pride! But you are a little god! A god, youth! Why don't you want to believe me? Or does the street, from which I have come, bother you? But look, look yourself Look in my eyes, do such eyes lie? Yes, my face is ugly, I make faces and grimaces, I am surrounded by laughter, but don't you see the god behind all this, a god, like you? Look, look at me! [*BEZANO bursts out laughing*] What are you laughing at, youth?

*Bezano* You look now as you did that evening in the ring You remember? When you were a great man, and they sent for you from the Academy, and suddenly—Hup! *He Who Gets Slapped!*

*He [laughing the same way]* Yes, yes, you are right, Bezano There is a resemblance [*With a strained expression, taking a pose*] "It seems to me they sent for me from the Academy!"

*Bezano [displeased]* But I don't like this play You can present your face for slaps if you want to, but don't dare to expose mine [*Turns to go*]

*He* Bezano!

*Bezano [turning around]* And never let me hear any more about Consuelo, and don't dare to tell me again that I am a god! It is disgusting

[*BEZANO goes out angrily, striking his boot with his whip HE is alone Wrathfully, with a tortured expression, he makes a step towards the jockey, then stops, with soundless laughter, his head thrown backwards The BARON*

*and MANCINI find him in this position, when they enter*]

*Mancini [laughing]* What a cheerful chap you are, He! You laugh when you are alone [*He laughs aloud*] Stop it, fool! How can you stand it?

*He [bowing low, with a large gesture]* How do you do, Baron? My humblest respects to you, Count I beg your pardon, Count, but you found the clown at work These are, so to speak, Baron, his everyday pleasures

*Mancini [lifting his eyebrows]* Tsss But you are a clever man, He I shall ask Papa Briquet to give you a benefit performance Shall I, He?

*He* Please do me the favour, Count

*Mancini* Don't overdo Be more simple, He [*Laughs*] But how many slaps will you get at your benefit performance, when even on weekdays they ring you like a gong! A funny profession, isn't it, Baron?

*Baron* Very strange But where is the Countess?

*Mancini* Yes, yes I shall go for her at once Dear child, she is so absorbed in her benefit performance and her work They call this jumping work, Baron

*Baron* I can wait a little [*Sits down, with his silk hat on his head*]

*Mancini* But why? I shall hurry her up I shall be back at once And you, He, be a nice host, and entertain our dear guest You will not be bored in his company, Baron

[*He goes out HE strides about the stage, smiling and glancing from time to time at the BARON The latter sits with his legs spread apart and his chin on the top of his cane The silk hat remains on his head HE is silent*]

*He* In what way would you like me to entertain you, Baron?

*BARON* In no way! I don't like clowns

*He* Nor I Barons

[*Silence HE puts on his derby hat, takes a chair with a large gesture, and puts it down heavily, in front of the BARON HE sits astride it, imitating the pose of the BARON, and looks him in the eyes Silence*]

*He* Can you be silent very long?

*Baron* Very long

*He [taps on the floor with his foot]*  
And can you wait very long?

*Baron* Very long

*He* Until you get it?

*Baron* Until I get it And you?

*He.* I too

*[Both look at each other, silently, their heads close together From the ring one hears the strains of the Tango]*

#### ACT FOUR

*Music in the ring More disorder in the room than usual All kinds of actors' costumes hanging on pegs and lying in the corners On the table a bouquet of fiery-red roses, put there by some careless hand. At the entrance, near the arch, three bare-back riders are smoking and chattering; they are all minor actors All part their hair the same way; two wear small moustaches, the third one is clean-shaven with a face like a bull-dog*

*The Clean-Shaven One* Go on, Henry! Ten thousand francs! It's too much even for the Baron

*The Second* How much are roses now?

*The Shaven* I don't know In winter they are certainly more expensive, but still Henry talks nonsense Ten thousand!

*The Second* The Baron has his own hot-house They don't cost him anything

*Henry [throwing away his cigar, which has burned the tips of his fingers]* No, Grab, you're silly There's a whole car-load full! One can smell the roses a mile away They're to cover the entire arena

*The Shaven* Only the ring

*Henry* It's all the same In order to cover the ring, you must have thousands and thousands of roses You'll see what it looks like, when they've covered everything like a carpet He ordered them to make it like a carpet! Do you see, Grab?

*The Second* What a Baron's craze! Isn't it time yet?

*Henry* No, we have time enough I rather like it a fiery-red tango on a fiery-red cover of winter roses!

*The Shaven* Consuelo will be galloping on roses And Bezano?

*The Second* And Bezano on thorns  
[Smiles]

*The Shaven* That youngster has no self-respect I'd have refused

*Henry* But it is his job He's got to do it [Laughs] Talk to him about self-respect! He's as angry and proud as a little Satan

*The Second* No, you may say what you like, it's an excellent benefit performance It's a joy to look at the crowd They're so excited.

*Henry* Tss! [All throw away their cigars and cigarettes, like school boys who are caught, and make way for ZINIDA, who enters with HE]

*Zinida* What are you doing here, gentlemen? Your place is at the entrance

*Henry [with a respectful smile]* We are here just for a minute, Madame Zinida We are going What a successful evening! And what a glory for Papa Briquet!

*Zinida* Yes Go, and please don't leave your places [They go ZINIDA pulls a drawer out of the desk, and puts in some papers She is in her lion tamer's costume] He, what were you doing near my lions? You frightened me

*He* Why, Duchess, I merely wanted to hear what the beasts were saying about the benefit performance They are pacing in their cages, and growling

*Zinida* The music makes them nervous Sit down, He An excellent evening, and I am so glad that Consuelo is leaving us Have you heard about the Baron's roses?

*He* Everybody is talking about them. The Hymeneal roses!

*Zinida* Here are some, too [Pushes away the bouquet] You find them everywhere Yes, I am glad She is superfluous here, and disturbs our work It is a misfortune for a cast to have in it such a beautiful and such an accessible girl

*He* But it is an honest marriage, Duchess, is it not?

*Zinida* I don't care what it is

*He* Spiders, too, need an improvement in their breed! Can't you imagine, Zinida, what charming little spiders this couple will create! They will have the face of their mother, Consuelo, and the stomach of their father, the Baron, and thus could be an ornament for any circus-ring

*Zinida* You are malicious to-day, He You are morose

*He* I laugh



Zimda You do, but without joy Why are you without make-up?

He I am in the third act I have time And how does Bezano feel about this evening Is he glad?

Zimda I didn't talk to Bezano You know what I think, my friend? You, too, are superfluous here [Silence]

He How do you want me to take that, Zimda?

Zimda Just as I said In fact, Consuelo sold herself for nothing What is the Baron worth, with his poor millions? People say that you are clever, too clever perhaps, tell me then, for how much could one buy me?

He [looking as if he were pricing her]. Only for a crown

Zimda A baron's crown?

He No, a royal one

Zimda You are far from being stupid And you guessed that Consuelo is not Mancini's daughter?

He [startled] What! And she knows it?

Zimda Hardly And why should she know it? Yes, she is a girl from Corsica whose parents are unknown He preferred to use her for business rather than . . . But according to the law, she is his daughter, Countess Veronica Mancini

He It is nice, to have everything done according to law, isn't it, Zimda? But it is curious there is more blue blood in her than in this Mancini One would say that it was she who found him on the street, and made him a count and her father Count Mancini! [Laughs]

Zimda Yes, you are gloomy, He I changed my mind, you'd better stay

He Will I not be superfluous?

Zimda When she is gone, you will not Oh! You don't know yet, how nice it is to be with us What a rest for the body and mind I understand you I am clever, too Like you, I brought with me from out there my inclination for chains, and for a long time I chained myself to whatever I could, in order to feel firm

He Bezano?

Zimda Bezano and others, there were many, there will be many more My red lion, with whom I am desperately in love, is still more terrible than Bezano But it is all nonsense, old habits, which we are sorry to let go, like old servants who steal things.

Leave Consuelo alone She has her own way

He Automobiles and diamonds?

Zimda When did you see a beauty clad in simple cotton? If this one does not buy her, another will They buy off everything that is beautiful Yes, I know For the first ten years she will be a sad beauty, who will attract the eyes of the poor man on the side-walk afterwards she will begin to paint a little around her eyes and smile, and then will take—

He Her chauffeur or butler as a lover? You're not guessing badly, Zimda!

Zimda Am I not right? I don't want to intrude on your confidence, but to-day I am sorry for you, He What can you do against Fate? Don't be offended, my friend, by the words of a woman I like you, you are not beautiful, nor young, nor rich, and your place is—

He On the side-walk, from which one looks at the beauties [Laughs] And if I don't want to?

Zimda What does it matter, your "want" or "don't want"? I am sorry for you, my poor friend, but if you are a strong man, and I think you are, then there is only one way for you To forget

He You think that that's being strong? And you are saying this, you, Queen Zimda, who want to awaken the feeling of love, even in the heart of a lion? For one second of an illusory possession, you are ready to pay with your life, and still you advise me to forget! Give me your strong hand, my beautiful lady, see how much strength there is in this pressure, and don't pity me

[Enter BRIQUET and MANCINI The latter is reserved, and self-consciously imposing He has a new suit, but the same cane, and the same noiseless smile of a satyr]

Zimda [whispering] Will you stay?

He Yes I shan't go away.

Mancini How are you, my dear? But you are dazzling, my dear! I swear you are marvellous! Your lion would be an ass, if he did not kiss your hand, as I do . . . [Kisses her hand]

Zimda May I congratulate you, Count?

Mancini Yes, merci [To He] How are you, my dear?

He Good evening, Count!



*Briquet* Zinida, the Count wants to pay immediately for the breach of contract with Consuelo the Countess's contract. Don't you remember, Mother, how much it is?

*Zinida* I'll look it up, Papa

*Mancini* Yes, please Consuelo will not return here any more. We leave to-morrow

[ZINIDA and BRIQUET search among the papers. HE takes MANCINI roughly by the elbow, and draws him aside]

*He* [in a low voice]. How are your girls, Mancini?

*Mancini* What girls? What is this, stupidity or blackmail? Look out, sir, be careful, the policeman is not far

*He* You are much too severe, Mancini. I assumed, that since we are tête-à-tête

*Mancini* But tell me, what kind of tête-à-tête is possible, between a clown and me? [Laughs] You are stupid, He. You should say what you want, and not ask questions!

*Briquet* Three thousand francs, Count.

*Mancini* Is that all? For Consuelo? All right. I'll tell the Baron

*Zinida* You took—

*Briquet* Don't, Mother, don't.

*Zinida* Count, you drew in advance, I have it written down, eighty francs and twenty centimes. Will you pay this money, too?

*Mancini* Certainly, certainly. You will get three thousand and one hundred [Laughs] Twenty centimes! I never thought I could be so accurate! [Seriously] Yes, my friends. My daughter Consuelo—the Countess—and the Baron, expressed their desire to bid farewell to the whole cast

*He* The Baron, too?

*Mancini* Yes, Auguste, too. They want to do it during the intermission. Therefore, I ask you to gather here the more decent ones but please don't make it too crowded! He, will you, sir, be kind enough to run into the buffet and tell them to bring right away a basket of champagne, bottles and glasses—you understand?

*He* Yes, Count

*Mancini* Wait a minute, what's the hurry—what is this, a new costume? You are all burning like the devils in hell!

*He* You do me too much honour, Count, I am not a devil. I am merely a poor sinner whom the devils are frying a little. [He goes out, bowing like a clown]

*Mancini* A gifted chap, but too cunning

*Briquet* It's the Tango colour, in honour of your daughter, Count. He needs it for a new stunt, which he doesn't want to tell in advance. Don't you want to sit down, Count?

*Mancini* Auguste is waiting for me, but . . . it's all right [Takes a seat] Nevertheless I am sorry to leave you, my friend. High society, certainly, prerogatives of the title, castles of exalted noblemen, but where could I find such freedom, and such simplicity. And besides, these announcements, these burning posters, which take your breath in the morning, they had something which summoned, which encouraged. There, my friends, I shall become old

*Briquet* But pleasure of a higher kind, Count. Why are you silent, Zinida?

*Zinida* I'm listening

*Mancini* By the way, my dear, how do you like my suit? You have wonderful taste [Spreads out his lace tie and lace cuffs]

*Zinida* I like it. You look like a nobleman of the courts of long ago

*Mancini* Yes? But don't you think it is too conspicuous? Who wears lace and satin now? This dirty democracy will soon make us dress ourselves in sack cloth [With a sigh] Auguste told me that this jabot was out of place

*Zinida* The Baron is too severe

*Mancini* Yes, but it seems to me he is right. I am a little infected with your fancy [He returns. Two waiters follow him, carrying a basket of champagne and glasses. They prepare everything on the table]

*Mancini* Ah! merci, He. But please, none of this bourgeois exploding of corks, be slower and more modest. Send the bill to Baron Regnard. Then, we will be here, *Briquet* I must go

*Zinida* [looks at her watch] Yes, the act is going to end soon

*Mancini* Heavens! [Disappears in a hurry]

*Briquet*. The devil take him!

*Zimda [pointing to the waiter]* Not so loud, Louis!

*Briquet* No! The devil take him! And why couldn't you help me, Mother? You left me alone to talk to him High Society! High pleasures! Swindler [He and ZIMDA laugh *The waiters smile*]

*Briquet [to the waiters]* What are you laughing about? You can go We will help ourselves Whiskey and soda, Jean! [In a low and angry voice] Champagne!

[Enter JACKSON, in his clown's costume]

*Jackson* A whiskey and soda for me, too! At least I hear some laughter here Those idiots have simply forgotten how to laugh My sun was rising and setting and crawling all over the ring—and not a smile! Look at my bottom, shines like a mirror! [Turns around quickly] Beg your pardon, Zimda And you don't look badly to-night, He Look out for your cheeks I hate beauties

*Briquet* A benefit performance crowd!

*Jackson [looking in a hand mirror, correcting his make-up]* In the orchestra there are some Barons and Egyptian mummies I got a belly-ache from fright I am an honest clown I can't stand it when they look at me as if I had stolen a handkerchief He, please give them a good many slaps to-night

*He* Be quiet, Jim, I shall avenge you [He goes out]

*Zimda* And how is Bezano?

*Jackson [grumbling]* Bezano! A crazy success But he is crazy, he will break his neck to-morrow Why does he run such a risk? Or perhaps he has wings, like a god? Devil take it It's disgusting to look at him It's not work any more

*Briquet* You are right, Jim! It is not work any more To your health, old comrade, Jackson

*Jackson* To yours, Louis

*Briquet* It is not work any more, since these Barons came here! Do you hear? They are laughing But I am indignant, I am indignant, Jim! What do they want here, these Barons? Let them steal hens in other hen roosts, and leave us in peace Ah! Had I been Secretary of the Interior, I should have made an iron fence between us and those people

*Jackson* I am very sorry myself for our dear little Consuelo I don't know why,

but it seems to me that we all look to-day more like swindlers than honest artists Don't you think so, Zimda?

*Zimda* Everybody does what he wants It's Consuelo's business and her father's

*Briquet* No, Mother, that's not true! Not everybody does what he wants, but it turns out this way . devil knows why

[Enter ANGELICA and THOMAS, an athlete]

*Angelica* Is this where we're going to have champagne?

*Briquet* And you're glad already?

*Thomas* There it is! Oh, oh, what a lot!

*Angelica* The Count told me to come here I met him

*Briquet [angrily]* All right, if he said so, but there is no reason to enjoy it Look out, Angelica, you will have a bad end I see you through and through How does she work, Thomas?

*Thomas* Very well

*Angelica [in a low voice]* How angry Papa Briquet is to-night

[Enter HE, TILLY, POLLY, and other actors, all in their costumes]

*Tilly* Do you really want champagne?

*Polly* I don't want it at all Do you, Tilly?

*Tilly* And I don't want it He, did you see how the Count walks? [Walks, imitating MANCINI *Laughter*]

*Polly* Let me be the Baron Take my arm Look out, ass, you stepped on my beloved family tree!

*Angelica* It'll soon be finished Consuelo is galloping now It is her waltz What a success she is having!

[All listen to the waltz TILLY and POLLY are singing it softly]

*Angelica* She is so beautiful! Are those her flowers?

[They listen Suddenly, a crash as if a broken wall were tumbling down applause, shouting, screaming, much motion on the stage The actors are pouring champagne New ones come in, talking and laughing When they notice the director and the champagne, they become quiet and modest]

*Voices* They're coming! What a suc-

cess! I should say, since all the orchestra seats . . . And what will it be when they see the Tango? Don't be envious, Alphonse

*Briquet* Silence! Not so much noise, please! Zinida, look here, don't be so quiet! High society!

*[Enter CONSUELO, on the arm of the BARON, who is stiff and erect. She is happy. MANCINI, serious and happy. Behind them, riders, actors, actresses. The BARON has in his button-hole a fiery-red rose. All applaud and cry "Bravo, bravo!" ]*

*Consuelo* Friends my dears . . . Father, I can't *[Throws herself into MANCINI'S arms, and hides her face on his shoulder. MANCINI looks with a smile over her head at the BARON. BARON smiles slightly, but remains earnest and motionless. A new burst of applause.]*

*Briquet* Enough, children! Enough!

*Mancini* Calm yourself, calm yourself, my child. How they all love you! *[Taking a step forward.]* Ladies and gentlemen, Baron Regnard did me the honour yesterday, to ask for the hand of my daughter, the Countess Veronica, whom you knew under the name of Consuelo. Please take your glasses.

*Consuelo* No, I am still Consuelo, tonight, and I shall always be Consuelo! Zinida, dear! *[Falls on the neck of ZINIDA. Fresh applause.]*

*Briquet* Stop it! Silence! Take your glasses. What are you standing here for? If you came, then take the glasses.

*Tilly* *[trembling]* They are frightened. You take yours first, Papa, and we will follow.

*[They take the glasses. CONSUELO is near the BARON, holding the sleeve of his dress coat with her left hand. In her right hand, she has a glass of champagne, which spills over.]*

*Baron* You are spilling your wine, Consuelo.

*Consuelo* Ah! It is nothing! I am frightened, too. Are you, Father?

*Mancini* Silly child *[An awkward silence.]*

*Briquet* *[with a step forward.]* Countess! As the director of the circus, who was happy

enough . . . to witness . . . many times . . . your successes . . .

*Consuelo* I do not like this, Papa Briquet! I am Consuelo. What do you want to do with me? I shall cry. I don't want this "Countess." Give me a kiss, Briquet!

*Briquet* Ah, Consuelo! Books have killed you.

*[Kisses her with tears. Laughter, applause. The clowns cluck like hens, bark, and express their emotions in many other ways. The motley crowd of clowns, which is ready for the pantomime, becomes more and more lively. The BARON is motionless, there is a wide space around him, the people touch glasses with him in a hurry, and go off to one side. With CONSUELO they clink willingly and cheerfully. She kisses the women.]*

*Jackson* Silence! Consuelo, from today on, I extinguish my sun. Let the dark night come after you leave us. You were a nice comrade and worker, we all loved you and will love the traces of your little feet on the sand. Nothing remains to us!

*Consuelo* You are so good, so good, Jim. So good that there is no one better. And your sun is better than all the other suns. I laughed so much at it. Alfred, dear, why don't you come? I was looking for you.

*Bezano* My congratulations, Countess.

*Consuelo* Alfred, I am Consuelo!

*Bezano* When you are on horseback, but here—I congratulate you, Countess. *[He passes, only slightly touching CONSUELO'S glass. CONSUELO still holds it. MANCINI looks at the BARON with a smile. The latter is motionless.]*

*Briquet* Nonsense, Bezano. You are making Consuelo unhappy. She is a good comrade.

*Consuelo* No, it's all right.

*Angelica* You'll dance the Tango with her to-night, so how is she a countess?

*Tilly* May I clink glasses with you, Consuelo? You know Polly has died of grief already, and I am going to die. I have such a weak stomach.

*[Laughter, BARON shows slight displeasure. General motion.]*

*Mancini* Enough, enough! The intermission is over

*Consuelo* Already? It's so nice here

*Briquet* I shall prolong it They can wait Tell them, Thomas

*Mancini* Auguste, the musicians of the orchestra, too, ask permission to congratulate you and Consuelo Do you ?

*Baron* Certainly, certainly

[Enter crowd of musicians The conductor, an old Italian, lifts his glass solemnly and without looking at the BARON]

The Conductor Consuelo! They call you Countess here, but for me you were and are Consuelo

*Consuelo* Certainly!

*Conductor* Consuelo! My violins and bassoons, my trumpets and drums, all are drinking your health Be happy, dear child, as you were happy here And we shall conserve for ever in our hearts the fair memory of our light-winged fairy, who guided our bows so long I have finished! Give my love to our beautiful Italy Consuelo

[Applause, compliments The musicians one after another clink glasses and go out into the corridor CONSUELO is almost crying]

*Mancini* Don't be so sensitive, my child, it is indecent Had I known that you would respond this way to this comedy—Auguste look how touched this little heart is!

*Baron* Calm yourself, Consuelo

*Consuelo* It is all right Ah, Father, listen!

[The musicians are playing the Tango in the corridor. Exclamations]

*Mancini* You see It is for you

*Consuelo* They are so nice My Tango! I want to dance Who is going to dance with me? [Looks around, seeing BEZANO, who turns away sadly] Who, then?

*Voices* Baron! Let the Baron dance! Baron!

*Baron* All right [Takes CONSUELO's arm and stands in the centre of a circle of friends] I do not know how to dance the Tango, but I shall hold tight Dance, Consuelo [He stands still, looking at her, and a little while, he an

iron-moulded man, holding CONSUELO's arm firmly and seriously]

*Mancini* [applauding]. Bravo! Bravo! [CONSUELO makes a few restless movements and pulls her arm away]

*Consuelo* No, I can't this way How stupid! Let me go! [She goes to ZINNA and embraces her, as if hiding herself The music still plays The BARON goes off quietly to the side There is an unfriendly silence among the cast They shrug their shoulders]

*Mancini* [alone] Bravo! Bravo! It is charming, it is exquisite!

*Jackson* Not entirely, Count

[TILLY and POLLY imitate the BARON and CONSUELO without moving from their places]

*Tilly* [shrieking] Let me go!

*Polly* No, I'll not Dance!

[The music stops abruptly General, too loud laughter; the clowns bark and roar PAPA BRIQUET gesticulates, in order to re-establish silence The BARON is apparently as indifferent as before]

*Mancini* Really these vagabonds are becoming too impertinent [Shrugging his shoulders] It smells of the stable You cannot help it, Auguste!

*Baron* Don't be upset, Count

He [holding his glass, approaches the BARON] Baron! Will you permit me to make a toast?

*Baron* Make it

He To your dance! [Slight laughter in the crowd]

*Baron* I don't dance!

He Then another one, Baron Let us drink to those who know how to wait longer, until they get it

*Baron* I do not accept any toasts which I do not understand Say it more simply

[Voice of a woman "Bravo, He!"] Slight laughter MANCINI says something hastily to BRIQUET, the latter spreads his arms in gesture of helplessness JACKSON takes HE by the arm]

*Jackson* Beat it, Hrl The Baron doesn't like jokes

He But I want to drink with the Baron What can be simpler? simpler? Baron let us drink to the very small distance

which will always remain 'twixt the cup and the lip! [*Spills his wine, and laughs*]

[*The BARON turns his back on him, indifferently The music plays in the ring The bell rings*]

Briquet [*relieved*] There! To the ring, ladies and gentlemen, to the ring, to the ring!

[*The actresses run out The crowd becomes smaller; laughter and voices*]

Mancini [*much excited, whispers to the BARON*] "Auguste, Auguste—"

Briquet [*to ZINIDA*] Thank heaven they're beginning Ah, Mother, I asked you but you want a scandal by all means, and you always—

Zinida Let me alone, Louis

[*He approaches CONSUELO, who is alone*]

Consuelo He, deary, how are you? I thought you didn't want even to come near me [*In a low voice*] Did you notice Bezano?

He I was waiting for my turn, Queen It was so difficult to get through the crowd to approach you

Consuelo Through the crowd? [*With a sad smile*] I am quite alone What do you want, Father?

Mancini Child! Auguste

Consuelo [*pulling away her hand*] Let me alone! I'll soon be—Come here, He What did you say to him? They all laughed I couldn't understand What?

He I joked, Consuelo

Consuelo Please don't, He, don't make him angry, he is so terrible Did you see how he pressed my arm? I wanted to scream [*With tears in her eyes*] He hurt me!

He It's not too late yet Refuse him

Consuelo It is too late, He Don't talk about it

He Do you want it? I will take you away from here

Consuelo Where to? [*Laughs*] Ah, my dear little silly boy, where could you take me to? All right, be quiet How pale you are! You too, love me? Don't He, please don't! Why do they all love me?

He You are so beautiful!

Consuelo No, no It's not true They must not love me I was still a little cheerful, but when they began to speak so

nicely and about Italy and to bid farewell, as if I were dying, I thought I should begin to cry Don't talk, don't talk, but drink to . my happiness [*With a sad smile*] To my happiness, He What are you doing?

He I am throwing away the glass from which you drank with the others I shall give you another one Wait a minute. [*Goes to pour champagne CONSUELO walks about thoughtfully Almost all are gone Only the principal figures are left*]

Mancini [*coming to her*] But it is really becoming indecent, Veronica Auguste is so nice, he is waiting for you, and you talk here with this clown Some stupid secrets They're looking at you—it is becoming noticeable It is high time, Veronica, to get rid of these habits

Consuelo [*loudly*] Let me alone, Father! I want to do so, and will do so They are all my friends Do you hear? Let me alone!

Baron Don't, Count Please, Consuelo, talk to whomever you please and as much as you want Would you like a cigar, Count? Dear Briquet, please order them to prolong the intermission a little more

Briquet With pleasure, Baron The orchestra crowd can be a little angry [*Goes, and returns shortly He gives a glass to CONSUELO*]

He Here is your glass To your happiness, to your freedom, Consuelo

Consuelo And where is yours? We must touch our glasses

He You leave half

Consuelo Must I drink so much? He, deary, I shall become drunk I still have to ride

He No, you will not be drunk Dear little girl, did you forget that I am your magician? Be quiet and drink I charmed the wine My witchery is in it Drink, goddess

Consuelo [*lingering*] What kind eyes you have But why are you so pale?

He Because I love you Look at my kind eyes and drink, give yourself up to my charms, goddess! You shall fall asleep, and wake again, as before Do you remember? And you shall see your country, your sky

Consuelo [*bringing the glass to her lips*] I shall see all this, is that true?

*He [growing paler]* Yes! Awake, goddess, and remember the time when, covered with snow-white sea-foam, thou didst emerge from the sky blue waters Remember heaven, and the low eastern wind, and the whisper of the foam at thy marble feet

*Consuelo [drinking]* There! Look! Just a half! Take it But what is the matter with you? Are you laughing or crying?

*He* I am laughing and crying

*Mancini [pushing HE away, slightly]* Enough, Countess, my patience is exhausted If Auguste is good enough to allow it, then I, your Father—Your arm, Countess! Will you step aside, sir?

*Consuelo* I am tired

*Mancini* You are not too tired to chatter and drink wine with a clown, and when your duty calls you—Briquet! Tell them to ring the bell It is time

*Consuelo* I am tired, Father

*Zimda* Count, it is cruel Don't you see how pale she has become?

*Baron* What is the matter with you, dear little Consuelo?

*Consuelo* Nothing

*Zimda* She simply needs a rest, Baron She hasn't sat down yet and so much excitement Sit down here, dear child Cover yourself and rest a little Men are so cruel!

*Consuelo* I will have to work [*Closing her eyes*] And the roses, are they ready?

*Zimda* Ready, dear, ready You will have such an extraordinary carpet You will gallop as if on air Rest

*Polly* Do you want some moosic? We will play you a song, do you want it?

*Consuelo [smiling, eyes closed]* Yes, I do

[*The clowns play a soft and naïve song, tilly-polly, tilly-polly General silence He sits in the corner with his face turned away JACKSON watches him out of the corner of his eye and drinks wine, lazily The BARON, in his usual pose, wide and heavily spread legs, looks at the pale face of CONSUELO, with his bulging motionless eyes*]

*Consuelo [with a sudden cry]* Ah! Pain! What is it, Consuelo?

*Mancini* My child! Are you sick? Calm yourself

*Baron [growing pale]* Wait a moment

She was too much excited . *Consuelo!*

*Consuelo [gets up, looking before her with wide-open eyes, as if she were listening to something within herself]* Ah! I feel pain Here at the heart Father, what is it? I am afraid What is it? My feet . my feet too I can't stand .

[*Falls on divan, her eyes wide open*]

*Mancini [running about]* Bring a doctor! Heavens, it is terrible! Auguste, Baron . It never happened to her It is nerves, nerves . Calm yourself, calm, child—

*Briquet* Bring a doctor! [*Somebody runs for a doctor*]

*Jackson [in a voice full of fear]* HE, what is the matter with you?

*He* It is death, Consuelo, my little queen I killed you You are dying

[*HE cries, loudly and bitterly CONSUELO with a scream, closes her eyes, and becomes silent and quiet All are in terrible agitation The BARON is motionless, and sees only CONSUELO*]

*Mancini [furious]* You are lying, rascal! Damned clown! What did you give her? You poisoned her! Murderer! Bring a doctor!

*He* A doctor will not help You are dying, my little queen Consuelo! Consuelo!

[*BEZANO rushes in, cries "Briquet!" becomes silent and looks with horror at CONSUELO Somebody else comes in BRIQUET is making gestures for someone to close the door*]

*Consuelo [in a dull and distant voice]* You are joking, HE? Don't frighten me I am so frightened Is that death? I don't want it Ah, HE, my darling HE, tell me that you are joking, I am afraid, my dear, golden HE!

[*HE pushes away the BARON, with a commanding gesture, and stands in his place near CONSUELO The BARON stands as before, seeing only CONSUELO*]

*He* Yes, I am joking Don't you hear how I laugh, Consuelo? They all laugh at you here, my silly child Don't laugh, Jim.

She is tired, and wants to sleep How can you laugh, Jim! Sleep my dear, sleep my heart, sleep my love

*Consuelo* Yes, I have no more pain Why did you joke that way, and frighten me? Now I laugh at myself You told me, didn't you, that I should . live eternally?

*He* Yes, *Consuelo*! You shall live eternally Sleep Be calm [*Lifts up his arms, as if straining with all his forces to lift her soul higher*] How easy it is now! —How much light, how many lights are burning about you . The light is blinding you

*Consuelo* Yes, light . . Is that the ring?

*He* No, it is the sea and the sun what a sun! Don't you feel that you are the foam, white sea-foam, and you are flying to the sun? You feel light, you have no body, you are flying higher, my love!

*Consuelo* I am flying I am the sea-foam, and this is the sun, it shines . . . so strong I feel well

[*She dies Silence HE stays a moment with lifted arms, then takes a long look, lets his arms fall, and shakingly goes off to one side HE stands still for a moment, then sits down, drops his head on his hands, and struggles loneliness with the torpidity of coming death*]

*Briquet [slowly]* She has fallen asleep, Mother?

*Zinida [dropping the dead hand]* I am afraid not Step aside, Louis Baron, it is better for you to step aside Baron! Do you hear me? [*Weeps*] She is dead, Louis

[*The clowns and BRIQUET are crying MANCINI is overwhelmed The BARON and HE are motionless, each in his place*]

*Jackson [drawing out a large prismatic clown's handkerchief to wipe away his tears]* Faded, like a flower Sleep, little *Consuelo*! The only thing that remains of you is the trace of your little feet on the sand [*Cries*] Ah, what did you do, what did you do, *He*! . . It would have been better if you had never come to us

[*There is music in the ring*]

*Briquet [gesticulating]* The music! Stop the music! They are crazy there What a misfortune!

[*Someone runs off ZINIDA approaches the crying BEZANO and strokes his bowed, pomaded head When he notices her, he catches her hand and presses it to his eyes The BARON takes out the rose from his button-hole, tears off the petals, and drops it, grinding it with his foot A few pale faces peer through the door, the same masquerade crowd*]

*Zinida [over the head of BEZANO]* Louis, we must call the police

*Mancini [awakening from his stupor, screams]* The police! Call the police! It's a murder! I am Count Mancini, I am Count Mancini! They will cut off your head, murderer, damned clown, thief! I myself will kill you, rascal! Ah, you! [*He lifts his heavy head with difficulty*]

*He* They will cut off my head? And what more . Your Excellency?

*Baron* Sir! Listen, sir! I am going for the police Stop it, sir [*He suddenly takes a step forward and looking HE in the eyes, speaks in a hoarse voice, with a cough, holding one hand at his throat*] I am the witness I saw I am a witness I saw how he put poison . I—

[*He leaves the room, suddenly, with the same straight, heavy steps All move away from him, frightened HE drops his head again From time to time a tremor shakes his body*]

*Jackson [clasping his hands]* Then it is all true? Poisoned! What a vile man you are, *He* Is this the way to play? Now wait for the last slap of the executioner! [*Makes the gesture around his neck, of the guillotine TILLY and POLLY repeat the gesture*]

*Zinida* Leave his soul alone, Jim *He* was a man, and he loved Happy *Consuelo*!

[*A shot is heard in the corridor THOMAS, frightened, runs in and points to his head*]

*Thomas* Baron . Baron . his head . He shot himself

*Briquet* [throwing his arms up] God! What is it? The Baron? What a calamity for our circus

*Mancini* The Baron? The Baron? No! What are you standing here for? Ah!

*Briquet* Calm down, Count! Who would have believed it? Such a respectable . . . gentleman!

*He* [lifting his head with difficulty, he sees only dimly with his dulled eyes] What more? What happened?

*Thomas* The Baron shot himself! Honestly! Straight here! He's lying out yonder.

*He* [thinking it over] Baron? [Laughs] Then the Baron burst?

*Jackson*. Stop it! It's shameless! A man died and you . . . What's the matter with you, HE?

*He* [stands up, lifted to his feet by the last gleam of consciousness and life, speaks strongly and indignantly] You loved her so much, Baron? So much? My Consuelo? And you want to be ahead of me even there? No! I am coming! We shall prove then whose she is to be for ever

[HE catches at his throat, falls on his back. People run to him. General agitation]

THE END





JOHN FERGUSON

By ST JOHN ERVINE

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## ST JOHN ERVINE AND HIS PLAYS

ST JOHN GREER ERVINE was born in Belfast, Ireland, in 1883. He was for a time in the insurance business, then, a dramatic critic on various newspapers, next, director of the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, and during the world war, a lieutenant in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. After the war he became dramatic critic on the *London Observer*, lectured in America, and during the season of 1928-29 was engaged as special dramatic critic on the *New York World*. His home at present is in England.

Besides his plays Ervine has written novels, essays, political studies, and books on the theatre, including a very good one on playwriting, as well as a large body of dramatic criticism. As a critic he is fearless, original, and incisive, and, still more remarkably, is an outstanding critic who is also a successful dramatist. In this capacity he is not prolific, for within the entire period of his productivity, about twenty years, he has written only nine long plays (one of them a dramatization), and seven plays in one-act. Nor does he attempt wide variety in subject-matter, form, and tone, for almost all of his plays are either serious or tragic pieces of naturalism or realistic light comedies and farces.

In general, Ervine may be termed a naturalist, as are Brighouse and Houghton of the Manchester group, and the young playwrights, such as Lennox Robinson and T. C. Murray, who gathered with Ervine about the Abbey Theatre in Dublin. Just as the Manchester group, encouraged by the Gaiety Theatre, was writing plays about the Midlands, so the Dublin group, finding stimulus in the Abbey Theatre, was writing about Irish life and character. The material of most of Ervine's earlier plays (which, it must be acknowledged, are also his best), was provided by Irish life in the cities and towns, though the scene of *Jane Clegg* (first produced by the Gaiety Theatre in Manchester) is laid in England. *Mixed Marriage*, which depicts the Catholic-Protestant struggle in Belfast, *Jane Clegg*, a drab but admirably life-like study of domestic life, and *John Ferguson*, his masterpiece, were all written within four years, near the beginning of his career. These three plays show in common an uncompromising naturalism combined with a clear and steady yet sympathetic insight into character, an utter sincerity, and a mastery of structure and style.

Within the past ten years Ervine's plays have been more varied in quality and, on the whole, much less distinguished. Such a play as *The Ship*, though certainly interesting, is not remarkable, *The Lady of Belmont*, an ironical sequel to *The Merchant of Venice*, contains excellent satire, *Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary* is a good farce, *The First Mrs. Fraser*, a clever light comedy, perfectly conventional, might have been written by many another than the author of the early plays.

*John Ferguson* is not only Ervine's masterpiece but is surely one of the great things—the really noble things—of modern English drama. Few contemporary plays embody such an admirable balance of plot, character, and enveloping atmosphere, and very few indeed present such a superb character creation as John Ferguson, one of the most utterly convincing, one of the most appealing, figures in modern drama. Son of the soil as he is, product of heredity and environment, he is yet universal.

*John Ferguson* was first produced at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, on November 30, 1915. In America its first production was in New York, by the Theatre Guild, on May 12, 1919.

## CHARACTERS

JOHN FERGUSON, *a farmer*  
SARAH FERGUSON, *his wife*  
ANDREW FERGUSON, *his son*  
HANNAH FERGUSON, *his daughter*  
JAMES CAESAR, *a grocer*  
HENRY WITHEROW, *a farmer and miller*  
"CLUTIE"<sup>1</sup> JOHN MAGRATH, *a beggar*  
SAM MAWHINNEY, *a postman*  
SERGEANT KERNAGHAN, R.I.C.  
*Two Constables*  
*A Crowd of Men and Women, Boys and Girls*  
<sup>1</sup>"Clutie" is a slang expression meaning "left-handed"

*The action takes place in the kitchen of a farm-house in County Down, Ireland,  
in the late summer of the year 1885*

## JOHN FERGUSON

### ACT ONE

*It is the afternoon of a warm day in the late summer of the year 1885, and soft sunlight enters the kitchen of JOHN FERGUSON'S farm through the windows and the open door. The kitchen is comfortably furnished, although the FERGUSONS are no longer prosperous, for MRS FERGUSON, who is now sitting by the door, mending socks, takes great pride in maintaining the appearance of fortune. She is a short, stout, healthy woman, pleasant and agreeable even when she is as harassed as she now is, and her mind is moulded in the kindness of an Ulster woman. She is not a very intelligent woman, and so her sympathies are sometimes flattened by her lack of perception, but, within her limitations, she is an excellent wife and a very good mother.*

*Her husband, JOHN FERGUSON, is sitting in front of the turf fire, with a rug wrapped round his legs. He is reading a large Bible to himself, and his lips move as if he were silently pronouncing each word. He is an elderly, tired, delicate-looking man, and his dark beard is turning grey. His eyes are set deeply in his head, and they are full of a dark, glowing colour. His voice is slow but very firm, although his words are gentle. He looks like a portrait of Moses—not that Moses who led the Israelites out of Egypt and was a great captain of hosts, but the Moses who surveyed the Promised Land from Mount Nebo in the Plains of Moab.*

*The furniture of the kitchen is good and substantial, and of the sort that one sees in a decent homestead. The door leading to the loaming ("loame") or lane in front of the house is in the wall at the back of the scene. A person entering the kitchen from the loame would have a large window on his right hand in the same wall as the door, and a staircase on his left hand. Beyond the staircase, near the front of the scene, is a door leading to other rooms and also to the scullery and the back of the farm. The fireplace is in the wall opposite that in which the staircase is set. Under the window is a large sofa. A dresser is set between the*

*foot of the staircase and the door leading to the yard. A large table sits in the centre of the room. JOHN FERGUSON'S chair now stands against one end of this table, so that he can place his Bible on it easily when he is tired of holding it. The ornaments are those customary in such a house. Over the fireplace a gun is suspended.*

*Sarah Ferguson. I wonder where Hannah is. I haven't seen her for an hour past.*

*John Ferguson [without looking up]. She's mebbe in the fields with Andrew. Listen to this, Sarah! [He raises his voice as he reads from the thirtieth of the Psalms of David] "I will extol thee, O Lord, for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. O Lord, my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave; thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down into the pit. Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." [He emphasises what follows] For his anger endureth but a moment, in his favour is life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." [He turns to his wife] Do you hear that, Sarah? There's great comfort for you!*

*Sarah Ferguson. Well, indeed, I hope it will, for we have need of joy in this house. We've bore enough trouble. Here's the farm mortgaged up to the hilt, and you sick and not able to do no work this long while, and Henry Witherow bothering you for the money you owe him!*

*John Ferguson [holding up the Bible so that she can see it]. "Weeping may endure for a night," Sarah, "but joy cometh in the morning." Them's grand words! Don't be complaining now, for sure God never deserts His own people. We have His word for that, Sarah. We're tried a while, and then we're given our reward.*

*Sarah Ferguson. Well, we've earned ours, anyway! It's a great pity Andrew's such a poor hand on the farm.*

*John Ferguson. The lad was never meant for the land, Sarah. You know rightly. I*

dedicated him to the ministry the day he was born. It was a sore blow to the lad when I told him it couldn't be managed, but it was a sorer blow to me.

*Sarah Ferguson* Ay, indeed, it was, John. You were always quare set on Andrew.

*John Ferguson* [*proudly*] He's my son! I have great hopes of Andrew.

*Sarah Ferguson* Well, well, you would have done better, mebbe, to let him go on with his learning, for he's no use at all on the farm. I hope to my goodness his uncle Andrew'll send the money to pay the mortgage. It's quare him not writing this long while.

*John Ferguson* He's mebbe had bother. He'll write if he has the money by him. You may be sure of that.

*Sarah Ferguson* He never was much of a one for giving anything away, your brother Andrew, and mebbe he'll disappoint you the same as he's disappointed many another person.

*John Ferguson* I know he's near with money, but all the same I think he'll be willing to lend me the price of the mortgage. Him and me was born in this house, and we played here together as wee lads. Our da was born here too, and his da before him. Andrew couldn't let the farm go out of the family after all them generations.

*Sarah Ferguson* I trust, indeed, he'll not, but it's a quare poor look-out when you think he's never answered your letters to him this long time, and him knowing well you were sick and helpless. Dear knows what'll become of us all if he doesn't send the money! Henry Witherow's a hard man, John, and he'll not be willing to wait long. [*She rises and looks out of the door*] Here's Hannah now! I wonder is the mail in yet!

*John Ferguson* We'll know in a wee while. [*He takes up the Bible again and resumes his reading*]

[*HANNAH FERGUSON, a beautiful girl of twenty, enters the kitchen from the loane. Her thick black hair is uncovered*]

*Sarah Ferguson* Is the mail in yet?

*Hannah Ferguson* [*wearily*] The long-car only went by a minute or two ago. I met Clutie John at the end of the loane, and he said the mail would be late the day. [*She goes to the window-seat and sits*

*down*] It's like Sam Mawhinney to be late the time we want him to be early.

*John Ferguson* [*with gentle rebuke in his voice*] Hannah, child! You don't know what trouble the man may have had. It might not be his fault the mail's late. Sometimes there's a storm at sea, and that keeps the boats back. Mebbe the train was delayed. Many's a thing might have happened. You shouldn't be blaming Sam for what's mebbe not his fault.

*Hannah Ferguson* [*going to her father, and putting her arms round his neck*] Da, dear, aren't you the quare one for making excuses for people!

*Sarah Ferguson* Well, sure, a lot of them needs it. [*She has resumed her seat by the door and is again busy with her work of mending socks*]

*Hannah Ferguson*. How're you now, da? Are you better nor you were a while ago?

*John Ferguson* [*cheerfully*] Ah, boys-a-boys, Hannah, what did you mind me of it for? I was near forgetting I was sick at all. That shows I'm better in myself, doesn't it now?

*Hannah Ferguson* [*looking anxiously at him*] You're not letting on, are you, da?

*Sarah Ferguson* Letting on, indeed! Did you ever know your da to let on about anything?

*John Ferguson* Indeed, now, and I let on many's a time! There's whiles, when I'm sitting here before the fire, or mebbe there in front of the door when the days is warm, I pretend to myself I'm better again and can go out and do a day's work in the fields with any man. [*His voice drops into complaint*] I haven't been in the fields this long time.

*Sarah Ferguson* [*sharply*] Now, don't be going and making yourself unhappy, John!

*John Ferguson* No, woman, I won't. But it's hard for a man to be sitting here with a rug wrapped round his legs, and him not able to do a hand's turn for his wife and family.

*Hannah Ferguson* [*fondling him*] Ah, da, dear!

*John Ferguson* [*complaint now controlling his voice*] And me the man that was always active! There wasn't a one in the place could beat me at the reaping, not one. [*He remembers the consolations of his faith, although his voice falters as he speaks the next sentence*] But it's the

will of God! [*He pauses for a moment, and then his mind wanders again to his illness*] Sometimes, when I hear the men in the fields, cutting the corn and gathering the harvest, and them shouting to one another and laughing hearty together, I near cry Me not able to go out and help them to bring in the harvest. . . tied here like a wee child!

*Hannah Ferguson* [*tearfully*] Da, da, don't go on that way!

*Sarah Ferguson* [*impatiently*] Ah, quit, the two of you! Hannah, I'm surprised at you coming in and upsetting your da, and him keeping his heart up all day!

*Hannah Ferguson* I don't mean to bother you, da

*John Ferguson* [*patting her hair*] No, daughter, you didn't I know that rightly [*Stirring himself and speaking more briskly*] Ah, well! "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" God always has a word to comfort you when your heart's down Mebbe there's a letter in Sam Mawhinney's bag this minute that'll cheer us all up I'm a poor, mealy man to be complaining like that, Hannah, when there's many is worse off nor me . . . only I can't help it sometimes It's when the men are coming down the loanie in the evening with their scythes over their shoulders, and them tired and sweating and hungry for their supper! Well, God knows His own ways best, and there's many in the world has a harder time nor I have

*Hannah Ferguson* [*trying to take his mind off his illness*] I was letting on too, da!

*Sarah Ferguson* Well, indeed, you might have employed your time to better advantage, Hannah You can let on till you're tired, but you'll never alter anything that way

*John Ferguson* What were you letting on, daughter?

*Hannah Ferguson* I was letting on that my uncle Andrew had sent you all the money you need!

*Sarah Ferguson* Well, I hope your pretence will come true, for if he doesn't, we'll have to fit out of this It'll break your da's heart to go, and it'll break my heart too [*She rises and puts her work on the dresser*] I come here as a young girl, no older nor yourself, Hannah, to be married on your

da, and I've lived here ever since I'll never be happy nowhere else

*John Ferguson* [*ruminatingly*] Ay, it'll be hard to go

*Sarah Ferguson* There's no sense or purpose in it, God forgive me for saying it!

*John Ferguson* There's a meaning in it, whatever happens I can't see God's purpose, but I know well there is one His hand never makes a mistake

*Hannah Ferguson* [*bitterly*] It's quare and hard to see what purpose there is in misfortune and trouble for people that never done nothing to deserve it!

*Sarah Ferguson* Ah, quit it, Hannah! If God was to hear you saying the like of that, he'd mebbe strike you dead

*John Ferguson* Daughter, dear, you're a young shp of a grrl, or you'd never talk that way [*Sternly*] Do you think God doesn't know how to look after His own world? [*The severity of his voice relaxes*] Everything that happens is made to happen, and everything in the world, the commonest wee fly in the bushes before the door there, has a purpose and a meaning There's things hid from you and me because we're not fit to know them, but the more we fill ourselves with the glory of God, the better we get to understand the world It's people that's full of sin, Hannah, that can't see or understand That's sin—not knowing or understanding! Ignorance is sin Keeping your mind shut is sin Not letting the sun and the air and the warmth of God into your heart—that's sin, Hannah! [*He sinks back in his chair, fatigued by his outburst*]

*Sarah Ferguson* There now, you've made yourself tired

*John Ferguson* [*weakly*]. I'm all right, woman!

*Hannah Ferguson* [*going towards the door*] I wish to my goodness that man Mawhinney would come with the letters!

*John Ferguson* He'll soon be here now

*Hannah Ferguson* [*looking out*] He's never in sight yet! [*She speaks the next sentence petulantly, returning to her seat on the sofa as she does so*] Och, here's that man, Jimmy Caesar! I wonder what he wants!

*Sarah Ferguson* I wouldn't be surprised but it's you he's after! This isn't the first time he's been here lately, nor yet the second



*Hannah Ferguson* [crossly] Och, ma, quit talking! I wouldn't marry him if he was the last man in the world

*Sarah Ferguson* Well, dear bless us, if he was the last man in the world, and I wanted him for myself, I wouldn't like to run the risk of making you an offer of him! Sure, what's wrong with the man?

*Hannah Ferguson* [contemptuously] He's an old collie, that's what he is! He has no spirit in him at all! Look at the way he goes on about Henry Witherow and what he'll do to him when he gets the chance! He's had many a chance, but he's done nothing

*Sarah Ferguson* Would you have him kill the man?

*Hannah Ferguson* He shouldn't go about the place threatening to have Witherow's life when he doesn't mean to take it

*John Ferguson* Daughter, dear, I don't like to hear you speaking so bitterly! It's foolish of Jimmy Caesar to talk in the wild way he does, though, dear knows, he's had great provocation! But he doesn't mean the half he says!

*Hannah Ferguson* Well, he shouldn't say it then!

*Sarah Ferguson*. Ah, now, Hannah, if we were all to say just what we meant, more nor half of us would be struck dumb

*John Ferguson* Ay, you're right, woman! You are, indeed! Henry Witherow's a hard man, and he put many an indignity on Jimmy Caesar's family! If you knew all he's had to bear, Hannah, you'd pity him, and not be saying hard words against him

*Sarah Ferguson* Ay, indeed, John! Witherow 'll not be soft on us if we can't pay him what we owe him, and then, Hannah, you'll mebbe understand what Jimmy Caesar's feelings are

*Hannah Ferguson* I'll never understand the feelings of a collie! I like a man to have a spirit and do what he's said he'd do, or else keep his tongue quiet in his head

*Sarah Ferguson* Now, it's brave and hard to be having a spirit in these times! Sure, the man must have some pluck in him to turn round and make a good business for himself after him losing near every halfpenny he had, and that man Witherow near bankrupting him, and killing his old da and ma with grief! That's not a poor, paltry spirit, is it?

*John Ferguson* You'd better quit talk-

ing about him now! He'll step in the door any minute! Where was he when you saw him, Hannah?

*Hannah Ferguson* He was at the foot of the loanie

*Sarah Ferguson* It's a credit to him the way he's slaved and saved! I daresay he has a big bit of money saved up in the Ulster Bank! [She goes to the door and looks out] Ay, here he's coming! [She calls out to CAESAR] Is that you, Jimmy?

[CAESAR is heard to shout in response] If Hannah was to marry him, the way he wants her . . .

*Hannah Ferguson* I wouldn't marry him if he was rolling in riches and had gallons of gold!

*Sarah Ferguson* [returning to the kitchen]. Och, wheesht with you! Sure, the man's right enough, and, anyway, one man's no worse nor another!

[JAMES CAESAR comes to the door. He is a mean-looking man, about thirty-five years of age, and his look of meanness is not mitigated by his air of prosperity. His movements are awkward, and his speech is nervous. He is very eager to please HANNAH, whom he pretends not to see]

*James Caesar* Good-day to you all!

*John Ferguson* Good-day to you, Jimmy!

*James Caesar* [hesitating at the door]. Can I come in?

*Sarah Ferguson* Sure, do! You know you're always welcome here, Jimmy!

*James Caesar* [entering] It's kind of you to say that! [He puts his hat on the dresser] It's a brave day!

*Sarah Ferguson* It's not so bad

*James Caesar*. It'll do good to harvest [Pretending to see HANNAH for the first time] Is that you, Hannah? I didn't see you when I come in first! I hope you're keeping your health?

*Hannah Ferguson* [coldly] I'm bravely, thank you!

*James Caesar* I didn't see you this while back, and I was wondering to myself were you not well or something! I'm glad to see you looking so fine on it! [To JOHN FERGUSON] Did you hear from your brother Andrew, John?

*Sarah Ferguson* Sam Mawhinney's not got this length yet! Did you see him as you were coming up?

*James Caesar* I did not Are you keeping well, John?

*John Ferguson* I'm as well as can be expected, Jimmy

*James Caesar* That's good I'm glad to hear it It'll be a great blow to you if you have to leave the farm

*John Ferguson* It will

*James Caesar* [*bitterness growing into his voice*] Ay, it's a quare blow to any man to have to leave the house he was born and reared in, the way I had to do It's Witherow has your mortgage, isn't it?

*John Ferguson* Ay

*James Caesar* God curse him!

*John Ferguson* [*reproachfully*] Jimmy, Jimmy!

*James Caesar* Ah, you're a forgiving man, John Ferguson, but I'm not, and never will be Look at the way he treated me and mine I've never forgot that, and I never will if I live to be a hundred years old [*Violently*] I'll choke the life out of him one of these days!

*Hannah Ferguson* [*turning away scornfully*] Ah, quit, for dear sake You're always talking, Jimmy Caesar!

*James Caesar* [*ashamedly*] Ah, I'm always talking, Hannah, and never doing! 'Deed and you're right! When I think of the things he done to me, I go near distracted with shame for taking it as quiet as I have done I go out sometimes, demented mad, swearing to have his life—and I come home again, afeard to lay a finger on him He's big and powerful, and he can take a holt of me and do what he likes with me I'm heartsore at my weakness! That's the God's truth! You do well, Hannah, to be making little of me for a poor-natured man, but it's not for want of desire I don't do an injury to him I haven't the strength—or the courage

*John Ferguson* What way is that to be talking, Jimmy Caesar? Would you sin your soul with a murder? Man, man, mind what you're saying and thinking! You're in God's grief already for the thoughts you have in your head Them that has bad thoughts are no better in His eyes nor them that does bad deeds

*Sarah Ferguson* Ah, sure, you can't help having thoughts, whatever kind of a mind you have!

*John Ferguson* You can help brooding

on them What call has Jimmy to be wasting his mind on thinking bad about Henry Witherow? Your life isn't your own to do what you like with It's God's life, and no one else's And so is Henry Witherow's If you take his life or any man's life, no matter why you do it, you're robbing God

*Sarah Ferguson* Ah, for dear sake, quit talking about murders You'll have me out of my mind with fear Sure, nobody wants to kill anybody these times, what with civilisation and all them things

*Hannah Ferguson* [*sneeringly*] Och, ma, don't disturb yourself! Sure, you know it's only talk!

*James Caesar* Hannah!

*Hannah Ferguson* What?

*James Caesar* I wanted to have a talk with you, and I was wondering would you be coming down the town the night?

*Hannah Ferguson* [*decisively*] I'm not

*Sarah Ferguson* Ah, now, Hannah, you can just go down and get a few things from Jimmy's shop that I'm wanting I was thinking of going myself, but sure you can just step that length and bring them back with you, and while you're on the way, Jimmy can say what he wants to say

*Hannah Ferguson* [*sullenly*] You don't need the things till the morning, ma, and if you give Jimmy the order now, he can send them up the morrow

*James Caesar* Hannah, I want to speak to you particular Will you not come out with me for a wee while?

*Hannah Ferguson* I'm not in the way of going out again the night, thank you!

*Sarah Ferguson* Now, you've nothing to do, Hannah, and you can go along with him rightly

*Hannah Ferguson* I've plenty to do

[HENRY WITHEROW passes the window]

*Sarah Ferguson* Lord save us, there's Witherow

[JAMES CAESAR instinctively goes into the corner of the room farthest from the door HENRY WITHEROW, a tall, heavy, coarse-looking man, with a thick, brutal jaw, comes into the kitchen He has a look of great and ruthless strength, and all his movements are those of a man of decision and assurance He does not ask if he may enter the kitchen and sit down, he assumes that he may do so]

*Henry Witherow* [sitting down] Well, how're you all the day?

*Sarah Ferguson* [nervously] We're rightly, thank God, Mr Witherow!

*Henry Witherow* I'm glad to hear it I was just passing, John, and I thought I'd drop in and hear how you were getting on

*John Ferguson*. That was thoughtful of you, Henry

*Henry Witherow* How're you, Hannah? [He looks closely at her] Boys, but you're getting to be a fine-looking girl, Hannah! [He turns to MRS FERGUSON] You'll be having all the boys after her! Faith, I wouldn't mind going after her myself

*James Caesar* [pale with anger] Keep your talk to yourself, Henry Witherow!

*Henry Witherow* [contemptuously] Ah, you're there, are you? You haven't a notion of him, have you, Hannah?

*Hannah Ferguson* Your manners could be better, Mr Witherow

*Henry Witherow* [laughing] Could they, now? And who would improve them, eh? Mr James Caesar, Esquire, mebbe?

*James Caesar* We want no discourse with you, Henry Witherow Your presence in this house is not welcome!

*Henry Witherow* Oh, indeed! Have you bought the house? I've heard nothing about the sale, and I think I should have heard something about it I hold the mortgage, you know . .

*John Ferguson* There's no need for bitter talk, Henry Jimmy forgot himself

*Henry Witherow* Ah, well, as long as he admits it and says he's sorry!

*James Caesar* I'm not sorry

*Henry Witherow* God help you, your tongue's the strongest part of you [To JOHN FERGUSON] Now that I'm here, John, perhaps we could discuss a wee matter of business I don't suppose you want to talk about your affairs before all the neighbours, and so if Mr James Caesar will attend to his shop

*Sarah Ferguson* [to HANNAH] You can go down to the shop with him now, daughter, and leave your da and me to talk to Mr Witherow [She speaks quietly to HANNAH] For God's sake, Hannah, have him if he asks you Witherow 'll not spare us, and mebbe Jimmy 'll pay the mortgage

*Henry Witherow* [to JOHN FERGUSON] I suppose you haven't had any word from Andrew yet?

*John Ferguson* Not yet, Henry

*Henry Witherow* H'm, that's bad!

[SAM MAWHINNEY, the postman, goes past the window and then past the door]

*Sarah Ferguson* Lord bless us, there's Sam Mawhinney away past the door [She runs to the door] Hi, Sam, are you going past without giving us our letter?

*Sam Mawhinney* [coming to the door] What letter, Mrs Ferguson?

*Sarah Ferguson* [anxiously]. Haven't you one for us? . . .

*Sam Mawhinney*. I have not.

*Hannah Ferguson* You haven't! . . .

*Sarah Ferguson* Oh, God save us, he hasn't written after all!

*Hannah Ferguson* Isn't the American mail in yet, Sam?

*Sam Mawhinney* It's in, right enough I left a letter at Braniel's from their daughter over in Boston Were you expecting one?

*John Ferguson* [desolation in his voice] Ay, Sam, we were thinking there might be one, but it doesn't matter. We'll not keep you from your work

*Sam Mawhinney* I hope you're not put out by it It's a quare disappointment not to get a letter and you expecting it

*John Ferguson* Ay, Sam, it is

*Sam Mawhinney*. Well, good-evening to you!

*John Ferguson* Good-evening to you, Sam!

[The postman quits the door SARAH FERGUSON sits down in a chair near the dresser and begins to cry HANNAH stands at the window, looking out with hard, set eyes JIMMY CAESAR stands near her, twisting his cap awkwardly in his hands JOHN FERGUSON lies back in his chair in silence They are quiet for a few moments, during which HENRY WITHEROW glances about him, taking in the situation with satisfaction]

*Henry Witherow* I suppose that means you can't get the money to pay off the mortgage, John?

*John Ferguson* I'm afeard so, Henry

*Henry Witherow* [rising] Well, I'm sorry for you I have a great respect for you, John, and I'd do more for you nor for any one, but money's very close at present, and I need every penny I can put my hand

on I'll have to stand by my bargain I'm sorry for you all!

*James Caesar* That's a he, Henry Witherow, and you know well it is! You're the fine man to come here letting on to be sorry for John Ferguson when you would do anything to get him out of this. If you were sorry for him, what did you call in your money for when you knew he couldn't pay it? You know rightly you've had your heart set on the farm these years past, and you're afraid of your life he'll mebbe pay the mortgage . . .

*Henry Witherow [going to him and shaking him roughly]* I've stood enough of your back-chat, Caesar, and I'll stand no more of it.

*James Caesar [seebly]* Let me go, will you?

*Henry Witherow* I'll let you go when I've done with you.

*Hannah Ferguson [going to Witherow and striking him in the face]* Go out of this house, Henry Witherow. It's not yours yet, and till it is, there's the door to you!

*Henry Witherow [throwing Caesar from him so that he falls on the floor, where he lies moaning and shivering]* Heth, Hannah, you're a fine woman! You are, in sing! It's a pity to waste you on a lad like that! *[He pushes Caesar with his foot]* You ought to marry a man, Hannah, and not an old Jenny-Jol! *[He turns to John Ferguson]* John, I'll have to have a serious talk with you in a wee while, but it's no good stopping to have it now with all this disturbance. I'll go and see M'Conkey, the lawyer, first.

*John Ferguson* Very well, Henry.

*Henry Witherow* I'm sorry for you, but I must look after myself.

*John Ferguson* Ay, so you must. It's a hard thing to have to leave the home you're used to, but it can't be helped. I'm getting an old man, and I haven't much longer here. I'd like to end my days where they were begun, but

*Hannah Ferguson [going to her father]* Don't take on, da! There'll mebbe be a way out of it all. *[To Witherow]* Mr Witherow, will you not let the mortgage go on for a while longer? We've had a great deal of trouble lately, and my brother Andrew's not accustomed to the farm yet. If you were to give us more time, mebbe my uncle'll send the money later on . . .

*Henry Witherow* Ay, and mebbe he'll not. Your uncle Andrew's not over-anxious to part with anything as far as I can see. I'm sorry, Hannah, but I can't ruin myself to oblige other people.

*John Ferguson* It was to be. You can foreclose, Henry.

*Sarah Ferguson* Andrew's a poor brother to you, John, to let you be brought to this bother and you sick and sore.

*John Ferguson* Poor Andrew, he must be heart-wailed at not being able to send the money. He'd have sent it if he had had it by him. I know he would. I can picture him there, not writing because he hasn't the heart to tell us he can't send the money.

*[Caesar, who has risen from the floor, comes to John Ferguson and speaks almost hysterically]*

*James Caesar* John, I know rightly that Witherow has set his heart on your farm. I know he has, and he's an old hypocrite if he says he's sorry for you! But I'll spite him yet, I will! I'm willing to pay off the mortgage for you if it costs me every penny I have.

*Sarah Ferguson [rising and embracing him]* Oh, God reward you, Jimmy!

*James Caesar [putting her aside]* If Hannah'll listen to me.

*Henry Witherow* Ay, if Hannah'll listen to you! Huh! You'd make a bargain on your ma's coffin, Jimmy Caesar!

*James Caesar [weakly]* I don't want nothing more to say to you, Henry Witherow. Anything that passes between you and me now will come through a solicitor.

*Henry Witherow* Ay, you're mighty fond of the law. You'll get your fill of it one of these days. *[To Hannah]* Well, my bold girl, are you going to take the fine offer's been made for you here by Mr James Caesar, Esquire? Because I'd like to know what the position is before I go. There's no good in me going to M'Conkey and incurring expense needlessly!

*Hannah Ferguson* I bid you go before, Mr Witherow. Will you have me bid you go again?

*Henry Witherow* Ah, now, quit talking!

*Hannah Ferguson* It's well for you my da's sick, and there's no man in the house to chastise you the way you deserve. I can't put you out myself, so you must stay if you won't go.

*Henry Witherow [disconcerted, and be-*

*gunning to bluster*] Oh, come now, Hannah, there's no need to go on like that

*Hannah Ferguson* [*resuming her seat on the sofa*] I've said all I've got to say, Mr. Witherow. A decent man wouldn't be standing there after what I've said to you

[*The sound of a tin whistle is heard outside*]

*James Caesar* Mebbe you'll go now, Witherow!

*Henry Witherow* If I go, it'll not be because you ask me! [*To HANNAH*] You've a sharp tongue in your head, Hannah! I'd like to cut a bit of it off for you! [*To JOHN FERGUSON*] Well, John, you'll mebbe let me know later on what course you'll take about the mortgage. I'll be up at the mill the rest of the day. Good-morning to you all! [*He goes out*]

*James Caesar* Hell to him!

[*The whistling which has persisted all this time stops suddenly, and HENRY WITHEROW is heard outside shouting, "Get out of my road, damn you!" and then CLUTIE JOHN McGRATH, the half-wit, is heard crying, "Ah, don't strike me, Mr WITHEROW!"*]

*Sarah Ferguson* [*going to the door*]. Ah, dear save us, he's couped Clutie John into the hedge!

*James Caesar*. That's all he can do—strike weak lads like myself, and beat poor fellows that's away in the mind like Clutie John!

*Sarah Ferguson* [*returning to the kitchen*] Ah, well, he's not much hurt, anyway! [*Her eyes are still wet with tears, and she wipes them as she sits down*]

[*The tin whistle is heard again, and continues to be heard until CLUTIE JOHN appears at the door*]

*James Caesar* [*to JOHN FERGUSON*] You heard what I said, John?

*John Ferguson* [*picking up his Bible and preparing to read it again*] Ay, Jimmy, I heard you. You have a heart of corn! [*He reads*] "For his anger endureth not for a moment, in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" [*To his wife, who still weeps silently*] What are you crying for, Sarah? Do you not hear this from God's Word? "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" That's a promise, isn't it? Dry your eyes, woman! God's got everything planned, and He knows what's

best to be done. Don't be affronting Him with tears!

*James Caesar* [*touching him*] John, did you not hear me? I was saying I'd pay the mortgage if Hannah would only listen to me . . .

*John Ferguson*. Ay, Jimmy, I heard you right enough, and I'm thankful to you. It's kind and neighbourly of you, But Hannah has to decide them things for herself with the help of God, not with mine. There's no good in a man and a woman marrying if they have no kindly feeling for each other. I would rather Henry Witherow fore-closed nor let Hannah do anything she didn't want to do.

*Hannah Ferguson*. Da! [*She kneels beside him*]

*John Ferguson* [*drawing her close to him*] Ay, daughter?

*Hannah Ferguson* [*struggling to speak*]. Da, I . . . I . . .

*James Caesar* [*eagerly*] I wouldn't make a hard bargain with you, John! Do you hear me, Hannah? Your da and ma could live on in the place where he was born . . .

*Sarah Ferguson*. God 'll reward you, Jimmy!

[*HANNAH FERGUSON gets up from her place by her father's side. She looks at the old man for a few moments. He takes her hand in his and presses it warmly, and then smiles at her*]

*John Ferguson* Whatever you think best 'll be right, Hannah!

*Hannah Ferguson* Ay, da [*To JAMES CAESAR*] I thank you for your offer, Jimmy! I'll . . . I'll have you!

*John Ferguson* [*hoarsely*] Hannah?

*Hannah Ferguson* I'll have him, da!

*Sarah Ferguson* [*embracing her*] Oh, thank God, Hannah, thank God!

*James Caesar* [*uncertainly*] I can't tell you all I feel, Hannah, but I'll be a good man to you.

*John Ferguson*. May God bless the two of you!

[*The sound of the tin whistle grows louder. CLUTIE JOHN MAGRATH appears at the door. He is a half-wit, and his age is about thirty*]

*Clutie John* I see you're all there!

*Sarah Ferguson* Och, away on with you, Clutie! We don't want you here with your whistle!

*Clutie John* [*entering the kitchen*] Ah,

now, Mrs Ferguson, what harm does my whistle do to you? [To JAMES CAESAR] Good-evening to you, Mr Caesar!

James Caesar [sharply] I have nothing for you!

Clutie John That's a quare pity, Mr Caesar! I was thinking to myself as I was coming along, "Clutie John, if you were to meet Mr Caesar now, he'd mebbe give you the lend of a halfpenny!"

James Caesar Well, you were thinking wrong, then, and you can just march on out of this as quick as you like There's no money here for you

Clutie John Ah, well, the Lord will send relief, though you won't be the honoured instrument Sure, I'll just play a tune to you for the pleasure of the thing [He puts the whistle to his lips, and then takes it away again] You didn't kill Mr Witherow yet, Mr Caesar?

James Caesar [furiously] Go 'long to hell out of this, will you?

[He is about to strike CLUTIE JOHN, but MRS FERGUSON prevents him from doing so]

Sarah Ferguson Ah, don't hurt the poor soul, Jimmy! Sure, you know rightly he's astray in the mind

Clutie John Ay, that's true, Mrs Ferguson! That's true enough I'm away in the head, and I ought to be locked up in the asylum! And I would be if I was worse nor I am! It's a quare pity of a man that's not distracted enough to be put in the madhouse and not wise enough to be let do what the rest of you do It's a hard thing now that a man as harmless as myself can't be let play his whistle in peace

James Caesar Why don't you do some work?

Clutie John Sure, didn't I tell you I'm astray in the mind!

James Caesar It's a nice thing when a big lump of a man like yourself goes tramping about the country playing tunes on an old whistle instead of turning your hand to something useful You can work well enough if you like

Clutie John [regarding his whistle affectionately] I would rather be whistling There's plenty can work, but few can whistle

Hannah Ferguson What do you want, Clutie?

Clutie John I want many's a thing that I'll never get Did you ever hear me whistling, "Willie Reilly and His Colleen Bawn"? That's a grand tune, for all it's a Catholic tune!

James Caesar We heard it many's a time, and we don't want to hear it again Quit out of the place!

John Ferguson Come here, Clutie!

[CLUTIE JOHN goes to him]

Did you want anything to eat?

Clutie John I always want something to eat

John Ferguson Hannah, give him a sup of sweet milk and a piece of soda bread Poor lad, his belly is empty many's a time

[HANNAH goes to get the bread and milk for CLUTIE]

James Caesar It's a nice thing for her to be attending on the like of him

John Ferguson Why shouldn't she serve him? We're all children of the one Father, and we're serving Him when we're serving each other

Clutie John Will I whistle a tune to you, Mr Ferguson? [He does not wait for permission, but begins to play "Willie Reilly and His Colleen Bawn"]

Sarah Ferguson Ah, quit it, will you? You'll have me deafened with your noise!

Clutie John Do you not like my whistle, Mrs Ferguson? It's grand music You should see the wee childher running after me when I play it "Play us a tune, Clutie John!" they shout when I go by, and sure I just play one to them They're quare and fond of my whistle It's only people with bitter minds that doesn't like to hear it

[HANNAH brings the bread and milk to him, and he puts down his whistle in order to take them from her]

Ah, God love you, Hannah, for your kind heart!

Hannah Ferguson Did Henry Witherow hurt you, Clutie, when he couped you in the hedge?

Clutie John He did, in sang! He couped me head over heels, and me doing nothing at all to him That's a bitter man, Hannah, that would take the bite out of your mouth if it would bring a happorth of profit to him He never was known to give anything to anybody, that man! It's a poor and hungry house he has I was there one day when he was at his dinner, and he

never as much as asked me had I a mouth on me at all

*James Caesar* Ay, you're right there! You are, indeed! There's no charity or loving-kindness about him

*Clutie John* Well, he's not the only one in the world that's like that!

*James Caesar* There's people says he sold his soul to the devil

*Clutie John* Ah, why would the devil be buying souls when he can get millions of them for nothing? [*To JOHN FERGUSON*] Did your brother Andrew send the money to pay off the mortgage, Mr Ferguson?

*James Caesar* What do you know about his brother Andrew?

*Clutie John* I know many's a thing! I can tell you where a kingfisher has his nest this minute I saw a golden eagle once! It was in the West I saw it when I was whistling in Connacht It was a great big bird with a beak on it that would tear the life out of you if it was that way inclined. [*He finishes the milk*] This is the grand sweet milk! And the fine new bread, too! Isn't it grand now to have plenty of that? Will you not let me play a tune to you to reward you? Sure, I'll not ask you to give me the lend of a halfpenny for it, though you can if you like! I'll do it just for the pleasure of it

*John Ferguson* No, Clutie, we can't have you playing your whistle here the night You must go home now We have something important to talk about

*Sarah Ferguson* Go on, Clutie John! Away home with you now! We've had enough of your chat for one night You can finish your bread in the loanie

*James Caesar* I'm going now, Hannah Will you walk a piece of the road with me? I've not had you a minute to myself yet with all these interruptions!

*Hannah Ferguson* [*submissively*] Very well, Jimmy!

*Clutie John* [*astonished*] Are you going to marry him, Hannah?

*Hannah Ferguson* Ay, Clutie

*Clutie John* [*incredulously*] Ah, you're coddling!

*James Caesar* Come on, Hannah, and not be wasting your time talking to him! [*He goes to the door*] Here's Andrew coming across the fields We'd better wait and tell him

*Clutie John*. It'll be a great surprise for him

*Sarah Ferguson* Ay, and great joy to him when he knows we'll not have to quit the farm after all

[*ANDREW FERGUSON enters He is a slight, delicate-looking lad of nineteen, nearer in looks to his father than his mother He is very tired after his work in the fields, and he carelessly throws the bridle he is carrying into a corner of the kitchen as if he were too fatigued to put it in its proper place*]

*Andrew Ferguson*. Good-evening to you, Jimmy!

*James Caesar* Good-evening, Andrew! You're looking tired on it!

*Andrew Ferguson* [*sitting down heavily*] I am tired How're you, da?

*John Ferguson* I'm rightly, son!

*Andrew Ferguson* Ma, can I have a drop of sweet milk to drink? I'm nearly dead with the drouth

[*MRS FERGUSON goes to the crock to get the milk for him*]

*James Caesar* Andrew, I've great news for you Me and your sister's going to be married on it

*Andrew Ferguson* [*starting up*] You're what?

[*His mother puts a cup of milk into his hands*]

Thank you, ma!

*James Caesar* Ay, we're going to be married, Andrew Hannah's just settled it

*Sarah Ferguson* And we'll not have to quit out of the farm after all, Andrew! Jimmy says he'll pay the mortgage off!

*Andrew Ferguson* [*vaguely*] But I thought! [*He turns to HANNAH*]

*Hannah Ferguson* [*quickly*] It's kind of Jimmy, isn't it, Andrew?

*Andrew Ferguson* [*after a pause*] Ay it's kind!

*James Caesar* We just stopped to tell the news to you, Andrew, to hearten you up after your day's work, and now Hannah and me's going for a bit of a dandher together We haven't had a chance of a word by ourselves yet, and you know the way a couple likes to be by their lone, don't you? Are you ready, Hannah?

*Hannah Ferguson* Ay

*James Caesar* Well, come on! Good-night to you all!



All Good-night, Jimmy!

Clutie John God reward you, Mr Caesar  
James Caesar [*contemptuously*] Och, you!

[*He goes out* HANNAH follows him to the door]

Hannah Ferguson I won't be long before I'm back [*She goes out*]

Andrew Ferguson Da, is it true about Hannah and Jimmy?

John Ferguson Ay, son, it's true You saw them going out together

Andrew Ferguson But . did she do it of her own free will?

John Ferguson Would I force her to it, Andrew?

Andrew Ferguson No only I suppose my uncle Andrew didn't write, then?

John Ferguson No

Andrew Ferguson I wonder what made her It's a quare set-out, this!

Clutie John Did you never hear the story of the girl that killed herself over the head of love? It's a quare sad story

Sarah Ferguson Ah, wheesht with you, Clutie! Didn't I tell you before to quit out of this?

Clutie John [*coaxingly*] Let me stay a wee while longer here by the fire, Mrs Ferguson I'll not be disturbing you

Sarah Ferguson Well, close the door, then, and don't be talking so much!

[CLUTIE JOHN *does as she bids him*] Go up there now by the fire, and content yourself

[CLUTIE *sits down in a corner of the fireplace* MRS FERGUSON *seats herself on the sofa*]

Andrew Ferguson I saw Witherow going down the loanie I suppose he was in here about the mortgage?

John Ferguson Ay, he was He knows about Hannah and Jimmy

Sarah Ferguson There was a row between Witherow and Jimmy, and they had a bit of a scuffle Witherow caught a holt of Jimmy and knocked him down, and then Hannah went forward and struck Witherow flat in the face You could have knocked me down with a feather when she did it

Andrew Ferguson That was a queer thing for her to do Mebbe she's changed her mind about him She could hardly find a word hard enough for him one time I suppose it's all right It's a load off my mind

anyway to hear that the farm's safe, though God knows I'm a poor hand at working it

John Ferguson You'll get into the way of it in a wee while, son, and mebbe I'll be able to give you more help, now my mind's at ease It's hard on you that was reared for the ministry to have to turn your hand to farming and you not used to it!

Andrew Ferguson I daresay it'll do me some sort of good

Clutie John Listen! The girl I was telling you about, the one that killed herself, it was because her boy fell out with her That was the cause of it! She cried her eyes out to him, but it made no differs, and so she threw herself off a hill and was killed dead

Andrew Ferguson Wheesht, Clutie!

Sarah Ferguson Dear only knows where you get all them stories from that you're always telling, Clutie!

Clutie John I hear them in my travels

Sarah Ferguson Do you never hear no comic ones?

Clutie John Ah, I can't mind the comic ones I just mind the sad ones Them's the easiest to mind They say the man was sorry afterwards when he heard tell she'd killed herself, but sure it was no use being sorry then He should have been sorry before It was a great lep she took

Andrew Ferguson What's Jimmy going to do about the mortgage? Is he going to take it on himself or what?

John Ferguson I suppose so We haven't settled anything He said I could stay on here, your ma and me, with you to manage the farm

Sarah Ferguson It's brave and kind of him to do the like

Andrew Ferguson I don't see where the kindness comes in if he gets Hannah to marry him over it! I hope to God she's not doing it just to save the farm

John Ferguson It was her own choice, Andrew, son I said to her I would rather go into the Poorhouse nor have her do anything against her will I'm not saving I'm not glad she's consented to have Jimmy, for that would be a lie I *am* glad

Andrew Ferguson Because the farm's safe, da?

John Ferguson Ay, Andrew!

[*They are silent for a few moments*]  
What are you thinking, son? Are you thinking I'm letting her marry Jimmy against her



will just to save the farm? Is that what you're thinking?

*Andrew Ferguson* [evasively] I don't know what to think, da

*John Ferguson* I left her to her own choice Didn't I, Sarah?

*Sarah Ferguson* Ay, John, you did, and sure what does it matter, anyway? She's a young slip of a girl with wayward fancies in her head, mebbe, but Jimmy's as good and substantial a man as she's like to get, and he'll be a good husband to her It's a great thing for a girl to get a comfortable home to go to when she leaves the one she was reared in There's plenty of young women does be running after this and running after that, but sure there's nothing in the end to beat a kind man and a good home where the money is easy and regular

*Andrew Ferguson* It's easy to be saying that, ma, when you're past your desires

*Sarah Ferguson* I got my desire, Andrew, when I got your da I never desired no one else but him

*Andrew Ferguson* Would you like to have married Jimmy Caesar if he'd been your match when you were Hannah's age?

*Sarah Ferguson* There was never no question of me marrying any one but your da . . .

*Andrew Ferguson* But if there had—if your da's farm had been mortgaged like this one? . . .

*Sarah Ferguson* Ah, what's the good of if-ing and supposing? There's a deal too much of that goes on in this house And, anyway, we can't let your da be turned out of his home

*Andrew Ferguson* Then that is the reason! Hannah's marrying Jimmy Caesar for our sakes, not for her own!

*John Ferguson* No, no, Andrew, son, that's not it I tell you she took him of her own free will I wouldn't put no compulsion on her .

*Andrew Ferguson* No, da, I know you wouldn't; but are you sure you're not ready to believe she's taking him of her own free will just because she says she is?

*Sarah Ferguson* Sure, what else can he do?

*John Ferguson* God knows, Andrew, it'll hurt me sore to leave this house, but I'd go gladly out of it sooner nor cause Hannah a moment's unhappiness I'm trying

hard to do what's right I don't think I'm acting hypocritically, and I'm not deceiving myself

[The door opens suddenly, and HANNAH enters in a state of agitation She closes the door behind her, and then stands with her face to it She begins to sob without restraint]

*John Ferguson* [rising from his chair] What is it, daughter?

*Andrew Ferguson* [going to her]. Hannah!

*Sarah Ferguson* Don't bother her! [Going to her and drawing her into her arms] There, Hannah, dear, don't disturb yourself, daughter [To the others] She's overwrought with the excitement That's what it is! [To Hannah] Come and sit down, dear!

[She draws HANNAH towards the sofa, where they both sit down HANNAH buries her face in her mother's shoulder and sobs bitterly]

*Sarah Ferguson* Control yourself, daughter! You're all right now! No one'll harm you here!

*John Ferguson* Are you not well, Hannah?

*Andrew Ferguson* [coming close to his mother and sister] Hannah, do you not want to marry Jimmy Caesar?

*Sarah Ferguson* Ah, wheesht with you, Andrew, and not be putting notions into her head! It's just overwrought she is You know well she's been as anxious about the farm as any of us, and about your da, too, and she bore the bother well, but now that it's all settled, she's had to give way Sure, that's natural! There, daughter, dear, just cry away till you're better [She soothes HANNAH as she speaks to her]

*John Ferguson* [kicking the rug from his legs and going unsteadily to his wife and daughter] Hannah!

[HANNAH, still sobbing, does not reply] Hannah, daughter, do you hear me?

*Hannah Ferguson* [without raising her head] Ay, da!

*John Ferguson* Listen to me a while! [He tries to raise her face to his] Look up at me, daughter!

[She turns towards him] Don't cry, Hannah! I can't bear to see you crying, dear! [He makes her stand up, and then he clasps her to him] Listen to

me, Hannah! I've never deceived you nor been unjust to you, have I, daughter?

*Hannah Ferguson* No, da

*John Ferguson* And you know I'd beg my bread from door to door sooner nor hurt you, don't you? Isn't that true?

*Hannah Ferguson* Ay, da, it is

*John Ferguson* Well, don't be afeard to say what's in your mind, then! What is it that's upsetting you?

*Hannah Ferguson* [putting her arms about his neck, and drawing herself closer to him] Oh, da, I can't I can't!

*Sarah Ferguson* You can't what?

*John Ferguson* Do you not want to marry Jimmy?

*Hannah Ferguson* [sobbing anew] I can't thole him, da!

*John Ferguson* Very well, daughter! That'll be all right! Don't annoy yourself no more about him, dear It'll be all right

*Hannah Ferguson* I tried hard to want him, da, but I couldn't, and when he bid me good-night and tried to kiss me out in the loane, I near died!

*John Ferguson* I know, daughter

*Sarah Ferguson* [starting up in fear and anger] But you promised him, Hannah! John, you're never going to let her break her word to the man?

*John Ferguson* Wheesht, woman!

*Sarah Ferguson* [to her son] Andrew!

[She sees that ANDREW's sympathies are with HANNAH] Hannah, think shame of yourself!

*Hannah Ferguson* I can't take him, ma, I can't!

*Sarah Ferguson* Do you want to see your da turned out of the home he was born in, and him old and sick and not able to help himself?

*John Ferguson* [angrily] Quit it, woman, when I tell you!

*Sarah Ferguson* What's wrong with the man that she won't take him? There isn't a decenter, quieter fellow in the place, and him never took drink nor played devil's cards in his life There's plenty of girls would give the two eyes out of their head to have the chance of him Martha M'Clurg and Ann Close and Maggie M'Conkey, the whole lot of them, would jump with joy if he was to give a word to them [She turns on HANNAH], and what call have you to be setting yourself up when a decent, quiet

man offers for you, and you knowing all that depends on it?

*Andrew Ferguson* Ma, that's no way to talk to her!

*Sarah Ferguson* I'll say what I want to say

*Andrew Ferguson* You'll say no more If I hear you speaking another word to her like that, I'll walk out of the door and never come back again

*Sarah Ferguson* [sitting down and weeping helplessly] Oh, you're all again' me, your da and Hannah and you! I'll have to quit the house I was brought to when I was a young girl, and mebbe live in a wee house in the town or go into the Union!

*John Ferguson* [putting HANNAH into his chair] Sit down, daughter, and quieten yourself [To his wife] If we have to go into the Poorhouse, Sarah, we'll have to go [To his son] Put on your top-coat, Andrew, and go up to Witherow's and tell him he can take the farm

*Hannah Ferguson* [recovering herself slightly] No, da, no I'm all right again I'll marry Jimmy! I'm ashamed of the way I went on just now My ma was right It was just the upset that made me like it

*Sarah Ferguson* Ay, daughter, that was it

*John Ferguson* Wheesht, Sarah Go on, Andrew

*Andrew Ferguson* All right, da

*Sarah Ferguson* [angrily] Let her go herself and finish her work! The lad's wore out with tiredness

*Andrew Ferguson* I'm not that tired, ma

*Hannah Ferguson* [firmly] I'll go, Andrew It'll quieten me down to have the walk [To her father] Jimmy doesn't know yet, da I didn't tell him, and he's coming up here the night after he shuts his shop Mebbe you'll tell him before I come back?

*John Ferguson* All right, daughter, I will [To ANDREW] Hannah'll go, Andrew She doesn't want to be here when Jimmy comes [To HANNAH] Put a shawl over your head, daughter, and wrap yourself well from the night-air

*Hannah Ferguson* Ay, da!

[She goes upstairs to make herself ready to go out CLUTIE JOHN makes a faint sound on his whistle]

*John Ferguson* Ah, are you still there, Clutie John? I'd near forgot about you

*Clutie John* Will I play "Willie Reilly and his Colleen Bawn" to you?

*John Ferguson* No, boy, not the night Just keep quiet there in the heat of the fire

*Clutie John* It's a brave warm fire It's well to be them that has a good fire whenever they want it

[*HANNAH, wearing a shawl over her head, comes downstairs and goes across the kitchen to the door*]

*John Ferguson* You'll not be long, Hannah?

*Hannah Ferguson* No, da [*She opens the door and goes out, closing it behind her*]

*John Ferguson* I wonder will Witherow let the farm to some one else or will he till it himself?

*Andrew Ferguson* He'll mebbe till it himself

*Sarah Ferguson* I'd better be laying the supper for you all Is Clutie John to have his here?

*John Ferguson* Ay, let him have a bite to eat We'll mebbe not be able to [*He breaks off suddenly and turns to his son*] Light the lamp, Andrew, and draw the blinds [*He seats himself again in his chair*]

*Andrew Ferguson* Draw the blinds, Clutie

[*ANDREW lights the lamp while CLUTIE draws the blinds and MRS FERGUSON lays the table for supper*]

*Andrew Ferguson* I wonder what time Jimmy'll come

*John Ferguson* I hope he'll come soon so that he won't be here when Hannah comes back

*Andrew Ferguson* Ay Will I set the lamp near your elbow, da?

*John Ferguson* Ay, son, and reach the Bible to me, if you please

[*ANDREW hands the Bible to him*] Thank you, son

## ACT TWO

*It is more than an hour later, and it is quite dark outside JOHN FERGUSON and his wife and son are sitting at the table, eating their supper CLUTIE JOHN McGRATH is still seated in the corner of the fireplace He has laid his whistle aside and is engaged in eat-*

*ing the supper given to him by MRS FERGUSON*

*Sarah Ferguson* Hannah's gey and in getting back from Witherow's

*John Ferguson* Ay

*Sarah Ferguson* I wonder did she han her mind about Jimmy and go to the instead of going to Witherow's It's him not coming before this!

*Andrew Ferguson* Ah, I don't think she do that Hannah's not the sort to chan sudden

*Sarah Ferguson* Well, she changed sudden enough the night!

*Andrew Ferguson* Ah, that was because she was doing something she didn't want to do

*Sarah Ferguson* Well, if she has changed her mind, and Jimmy comes now we'll have to give him his supper, and if Hannah'll mebbe be here before he goes away again It'll be quare and awkward for us all

*Andrew Ferguson* Well, sure, you tell him when he comes, and then he'll not be wanting to stop to his supper

*Sarah Ferguson* Och, we'd have to offer the man something to eat anyway! It's only neighbourly to do that much [*She turns to CLUTIE JOHN*] Will you have some more tea, Clutie?

*Clutie John* Ay, if you please, Mrs Ferguson It's quare nice tea I don't often get the like of that any place I go

*Andrew Ferguson* It's a quare thing to me the way Jimmy runs after Hannah, and her showing him plain enough that she never had any regard for him

*Clutie John* 'Deed, Andrew, there's many a thing in the world is quarer nor that It's a quare thing now for a man to be blowing wind into a bit of a pipe and it to be making tunes for him That's quare if you like!

*Sarah Ferguson* Ah, you're daft about that old whistle of yours! [*She hands a cup of tea to him*] Here, drink up that, and don't talk so much! I suppose I'll have to let you sleep in the loft the night?

*Clutie John* Sure, that'll be a grand bed for me, lying on the hay

*Sarah Ferguson* I do believe you're not such a fool as you make out, Clutie! You've the fine knack of getting into people's houses and making them give you your

meals and a bed without them meaning to do it!

*Clutie John* I don't try to make them do it, Mrs Ferguson I just come in the house and sit down That's all I do

*Sarah Ferguson* Ay, that's all you do If you did any more, they'd mebbe have to keep you for the rest of your life! Once you're settled down, it's hard to persuade you to get up again

*Clutie John* You're letting on you're vexed with me, Mrs Ferguson, but sure I know rightly you're not A woman that has as kind a heart as you have

*Sarah Ferguson* Ah, wheesht with your talk! Will I cut another piece for you?

*Clutie John* Ay, if you please!

*[She cuts a piece of bread and gives it to him]*

*Andrew Ferguson* I wonder, da, would you be willing to go up to Belfast to live? I think I could mebbe get a place in a linen office there, and I daresay Hannah might get work in a wareroom or a shop Between the two of us, we could keep my ma and you rightly

*John Ferguson* I'd be as willing to go there as anywhere, son, if I have to quit out of this

*Andrew Ferguson* When I was thinking of going into the ministry, I got acquainted with a young fellow named M'Kinstry that was very well connected His da kept a linen mill in Belfast, and I daresay he'd be willing to put a word in for me if I was to ask him

*John Ferguson* Ay

*Andrew Ferguson* I think I'll go up to Belfast on Saturday and see young M'Kinstry I'll write a letter to him the night to tell him I'm coming, and I'll just let him know the position of things so that he can tell his da about me

*Sarah Ferguson [to ANDREW]* Will I pour you out a wee drop more tea, son?

*Andrew Ferguson* Thank you, ma

*[She takes his cup and fills it, and then passes it back to him]*

*John Ferguson* Who knows but my health will be better in Belfast nor it has been here? I'm not sure, when I think of it, but the mists that lie on the hills at night are bad for me They say there's a fine air in Belfast blowing up the Lough from the sea

*[There is a knock at the door]*

*Sarah Ferguson* There's some one at the door now It'll either be Hannah or Jimmy Clutie John, away and open it, will you?

*[CLUTIE JOHN goes to the door and opens it JAMES CAESAR steps in The assured manner which he assumed when HANNAH accepted him has become more pronounced]*

*James Caesar* I'm later nor I expected to be *[He turns to CLUTIE]* Here, Clutie, help me off with my coat, will you?

*[CLUTIE JOHN helps him to take off his overcoat]*

It's turned a bit cold the night! *[To CLUTIE]* Hang it up there on the rack, Clutie

*[CLUTIE does as he is bid, and then goes to his seat by the fire]*

I thought it would be as well to wear my top-coat, for you get quare and damp coming up the loanie in the mist! *[He goes to the fire and rubs his hands in the warmth]* Where's Hannah?

*Sarah Ferguson* She's out, Jimmy!

*James Caesar* Out, is she? It's very late for her to be out! She'll have to keep better hours nor this when she's married, eh? *[His attempt to be jovial falls heavy]* Has she not had her supper yet?

*Sarah Ferguson* No, not yet We're expecting her in every while

*James Caesar* I hope she'll not be long I want to discuss the wedding with her

*Sarah Ferguson* The wedding!

*James Caesar* Ay Sure, there's no sense in our waiting long, is there? If people's able to get married, they ought to get the ceremony over quick That's what I think, Mrs Ferguson Och, listen to me calling you Mrs Ferguson, just like a stranger! I ought to start calling you "Ma" to get into the way of it, or would you rather I called you "Mother"?

*Sarah Ferguson [nervously]* I'm not particular, Jimmy

*James Caesar* Some people's quare and particular about a thing like that They think it's common to say "ma" and "da," and they never let their children call them anything but "father" and "mother" I knew a family once up in Belfast that always called their parents "papa" and "mamma" It was quare and conceited of them—just as if they were English or anything like that

*John Ferguson* Jimmy, I want to say something to you!

*James Caesar* Ay, John! [*Jovially*] I can't start calling you "da" or "papa" or anything else but John, can I? [*To Mrs FERGUSON*] Do you know, I'm near dead of the drouth! If you could spare me a wee drop of tea! . . .

*Sarah Ferguson* [*rising and speaking hurriedly*] Of course, Jimmy, I will I don't know what I'm thinking about not to ask you to sit down to your supper [*She goes to the dresser for a cup and saucer*] Draw a chair up to the table, will you, and sit down!

*James Caesar* Ah, now, I don't want to be putting you to any inconvenience

*Sarah Ferguson* Sure, it's no bother at all Just come and content yourself I'm all throughother with the ups and downs we've had this day, and my manners is all shattered over the head of it Sit down here

*James Caesar* [*taking his place at the table*] Thank you, ma

*Sarah Ferguson* Will you have soda-bread or wheaten?

*James Caesar* Wheaten, if you please!

[*ANDREW FERGUSON rises from the table and goes to the side of the fire opposite to that on which CLUTIE JOHN is seated*]

*Sarah Ferguson* Help yourself to anything you want

*James Caesar* Thank you! [*He bows h's head*] Thank God for this meal, Amen! [*To JOHN FERGUSON*] I've been making plans in my head, John, about the future of the farm

*John Ferguson* Jimmy, I want to say something to you!

*James Caesar* [*slightly impatient*] Ay, but wait till I tell you about my plans! Now, how would it be if you were to let the land by itself, and you and the rest of you stay on in the house? Me and Hannah'll be getting married in a wee while and there'll only be the three of you left .

*John Ferguson* Jimmy!

*James Caesar* Now, let me get it all out before I forget any of it Andrew could mebbe resume his studies for the ministry I might be able to advance him the money for it

*Andrew Ferguson* That's a kindly thought, Jimmy!

*James Caesar* Ah, I've often thought I would like to be related to a minister It

looks well to be able to say the Reverend Mr So-and-So is your brother-in-law, particular if he's a well-known man such as you might be yourself, Andrew Or I was thinking if you didn't fancy the ministry any more, mebbe you'd come into the shop and learn the grocery! The fact is, betwixt ourselves, I'm thinking seriously of opening a branch establishment over at Bally-maclurg, and if I had you trained under me, Andrew, you'd do rightly as the manager of it

*John Ferguson* Jimmy, I'll never be able to thank you sufficient for your kindness

*James Caesar* Ah, don't mention it! Sure, it's a pleasure, and anyway it's in the family, you might say! I wonder what's keeping Hannah! Where is she at all?

*John Ferguson* Jimmy . . . Hannah's changed her mind!

*James Caesar* Changed her mind! What do you mean?

*John Ferguson* She's changed her mind, Jimmy!

*James Caesar* [*getting up and going to him the assured manner has dropped from him*] Do you mean she doesn't want to marry me no more?

*John Ferguson* Ay, that's what I mean

*James Caesar* But! Ah, quit your coddling, for dear sake! [*He goes back to his seat and begins to eat again*] You've been letting Clutie John put you up to this—trying to scare me I wouldn't wonder but Hannah's upstairs all the while, splitting her sides [*He gets up and goes to the foot of the staircase and calls up it*] Hi, Hannah, are you there?

*Clutie John* I never put them up to anything, Mr Caesar It's not my nature to do a thing like that

*James Caesar* [*calling up the stairs*] Come on down out of that, Hannah, and not be tormenting me!

*John Ferguson* She's not there, Jimmy

*James Caesar* [*coming back to the table*] Are you in earnest, John?

*John Ferguson* I am, Jimmy I'm quare and sorry for you

*James Caesar* But she gave her promise to me an hour ago! You heard her yourself!

*John Ferguson* I know, but she's changed her mind since

*James Caesar* What's come over her?

*John Ferguson* I can't tell you, Jimmy She just didn't feel that she could go on with the match It's a thing that you can't explain, Jimmy

*James Caesar* But . . the farm and the mortgage!

*John Ferguson* When I saw the way her mind was set, I told her to go up to Witherow's and tell him to foreclose!

*James Caesar* But, man alive!

*John Ferguson* That's the way of it, Jimmy I'm heartsore about it, but it can't be helped, can it?

*James Caesar [angrily]* Do you mean to sit there and tell me you're going to let her treat me like dirt beneath her feet after the way I've offered to help you?

*John Ferguson* I can't force her to do things against her will, Jimmy No good would come of the like of that either to her or to you

*James Caesar* I suppose you never thought of my position, John Ferguson? I've told all my neighbours already that Hannah and me are to be married, and now I'll have to tell them that she won't have me!

*Andrew Ferguson* My da can't help it, can he, if Hannah doesn't want to marry you?

*James Caesar* What'll Witherow say when he hears about it? My God, he'll be the first to know! [*He becomes wild with rage as this idea expands in his mind*] Had you no consideration at all, the whole pack of you? I was willing to cripple myself to get you out of your difficulty, and then you turn on me and affront me before the man I hate most in the world! That's kindness for you! That's the reward a man gets for being neighbourly!

*John Ferguson* Ay, you may well complain, Jimmy! I'm not denying your right to do so I'd have spared you from this if I could

*James Caesar* Can't you make her keep her promise to me? A man has the right to be respected by his own child, and if she doesn't obey you and do what you tell her, you should make her

*Andrew Ferguson* Would you marry a woman that doesn't want you?

*James Caesar [fiercely]* I want her, don't I? What does it matter to me whether she wants me or not so long as I'm married to her? My heart's hungry for her!

[*His ferocity passes into complaint*] Don't I know rightly she doesn't want me? But what does that matter to me? I've loved her since she was a wee child, and I'd be happy with her if she was never to give me a kind look Many and many a time, when the shop was closed, I went and sat out there in the fields and imagined her and me married together and living happy, us with two or three wee children, and them growing up fine and strong I could see her them times walking about in a fine silk dress, and looking grand on it, and all the neighbours nudging each other and saying the fine woman she was and the well we must be getting on in the world for her to be able to dress herself that nice! I could hardly bear it when I used to meet her afterwards, and she hadn't hardly a civil word for me, but I couldn't keep out of her way for all that, and many's a time I run quick and dodged round corners so's I should meet her again and have the pleasure of looking at her When she said she'd have me, I could feel big lumps rolling off me, and I was light-hearted and happy for all I knew she was only consenting to have me to save your farm, John I had my heart's desire, and I never felt so like a man before! And now! [*He rests his head on the table and begins to sob*]

*Sarah Ferguson [in anguish]* I can't bear to see a man crying! [*She goes to JIMMY*] Quit, Jimmy, son! It'll mebbe be all right in the end Don't disturb yourself so much, man!

*Andrew Ferguson [contemptuously]* There's no sense in going on that way!

*John Ferguson* Don't speak to him, Andrew! Leave the man to his grief!

*James Caesar [looking up, and addressing ANDREW]* I know rightly I'm making a poor show of myself, but I can't help it Wouldn't anybody that's had the life that I've had do the same as me? You're right and fine, Andrew, and full of your talk, but wait till you've had to bear what I have, and you'll see then what you'll do when something good that you've longed for all your life comes to you and then is taken from you [*He rises from the table, trying to recover himself and speak in an ordinary voice*] I'm sorry I bothered you all! I'll not trouble you with my company any longer It'll be better for me to be

going nor to be here when she comes back  
[*He moves towards the door*] I said some harsh words to you, John!

John Ferguson I'm not minding them, Jimmy I know well the state you're in

James Caesar I'm sorry I said them to you, all the same It was in anger I said them

[CLUTIE JOHN starts up from his seat in the corner, and holds up his hand for silence]

Clutie John Wheesht!

Sarah Ferguson What is it, Clutie?

Clutie John Wheesht, wheesht!

[*He goes to the door and opens it, while the others stand staring at him. He listens for a moment or two, and then he darts swiftly into the darkness*]

Sarah Ferguson In the name of God, what ails the fellow?

Andrew Ferguson [*going to the door*] He's heard something

Sarah Ferguson [*drawing a blind and peering out*] Oh, what is it?

Andrew Ferguson [*looking out*] I can't see anything Wait! [*He pauses a moment*] There's some one coming up the loanie I hear steps

James Caesar [*coming to his side, and listening*] It's some one running!

Andrew Ferguson Ayl! It's Hannah! [*He shouts to his sister*] What ails you, Hannah?

James Caesar I hope nothing's happened to her

Sarah Ferguson She must have been scared or something

[*She goes to the door and stands beside CAESAR. ANDREW FERGUSON is heard outside speaking inquiries to his sister. Then CAESAR and MRS FERGUSON come away from the door into the kitchen, and HANNAH, in a state of terrible agitation, appears in the doorway. She pauses wildly for a moment, glancing round the room without seeing anything because of sudden change from darkness to light*]

Sarah Ferguson Hannah, what ails you, dear?

[HANNAH goes quickly to her father and throws herself against his knees]

Hannah Ferguson Da, da!

John Ferguson. What is it, daughter? What is it?

[ANDREW FERGUSON, followed by CLUTIE JOHN, returns to the kitchen. He closes the door]

Andrew Ferguson. What ails her? Has she hurt herself?

John Ferguson Hannah!

[*He tries to lift her face to his, but she resists him*]

Hannah, what is it? Tell me, daughter!

Hannah Ferguson [*brokenly*] Da, da, I can't! . . .

John Ferguson You can't what, Hannah?

Hannah Ferguson. It's . . . it's fearful, da!

James Caesar Has any one harmed her? Hannah, has any one harmed you? [*To JOHN FERGUSON*] She was at Witherow's, wasn't she? [*Turning to the others*] That's where she was—at Witherow's! [*To HANNAH*] Hannah, do you hear me, girl? Has any one harmed you? Was it Witherow?

Hannah Ferguson I can't . . . can't . . .

James Caesar You must tell us [*Looking wildly about him*] My God, I'll go mad if any harm's happened to her!

Andrew Ferguson [*taking hold of his arm and leading him away from HANNAH*] Quieten yourself, Jimmy She'll tell us in a minute when she's herself again

John Ferguson Hannah, dear! Come closer to me, daughter! [*He lifts her head from his knees and draws her up so that her face rests against his*] Just keep quiet, daughter! No one'll harm you here Keep quite quiet! [*To JAMES CAESAR*] She was always a wee bit afeard of the dark, for she has a great imagination, and she mebbe thought she saw something fearful in the night Get her a wee sup of sweet milk, one of you!

[MRS FERGUSON goes to get the milk for her]

It's mebbe nothing but fright I've seen her as startled as this once before when she was a child

[HANNAH gives a great sob, and starts a little]

There, daughter, you needn't be scared! You're safe here from any harm

[MRS FERGUSON brings a cup of milk to him]

Thank you, Sarah! Here, Hannah, drink a wee sup of this! It'll do you good!

Hannah Ferguson [*clinging closer to him*] Na, da, no!



John Ferguson Ay, daughter, it'll help to steady you!

*[He puts the cup to her lips, and she drinks some of the milk.]*

That's right! That's right! You'll have a wee drop more, now!

*[She averts her head.]*

Ay, daughter, just have some more, and then you'll mebbe be quieter in yourself *[He compels her to drink some more of the milk, and then he puts the cup away]* That'll do you a power of good! *[He draws her head down to his breast]* Just rest your head on me, daughter, and keep still!

Clutie John She was crying bitter out there She was running up the loanie when I found her, and she let a screech out of her when I touched her arm, and then she run that hard I couldn't keep pace with her It must have been a fearful thing that scared her that way!

Sarah Ferguson I hope to my goodness it's no more sorrow for us We've had more nor our share already

John Ferguson Wheesht, wheesht, woman Wheesht!

James Caesar If Witherow's harmed her, I'll kill him I will, so help me, God!

John Ferguson Quit, quit! *[To HANNAH]* Are you better now, Hannah?

*[She still sobs a little, but her agitation has subsided, and she is now able to speak more or less coherently]*

Just tell me, daughter What happened you?

Hannah Ferguson Da, I'm ashamed!

John Ferguson Ashamed, daughter!

Sarah Ferguson She said she was ashamed! Oh, my God!

John Ferguson What are you ashamed of, daughter?

Hannah Ferguson I . *[She relapses]* I can't tell you, da, I can't tell you!

James Caesar Was it Witherow, Hannah?

John Ferguson Don't bother her, Jimmy!

James Caesar I know it was Witherow, I know it was him!

John Ferguson Hannah! Look up, daughter!

Hannah Ferguson Yes, da!

John Ferguson Tell me about it!

Hannah Ferguson *[making an effort to control herself, now and then speaking brokenly]* I went up to Witherow's farm,

the way you told me, and there were two people waiting to talk to him

John Ferguson Ay

Hannah Ferguson He kept me waiting till after he had done with them I told him we couldn't pay the money and he was to foreclose, and then he began laughing at me and making a mock of Jimmy *[She looks up and sees CAESAR and hesitates to finish her sentence]*

James Caesar Was it me he made a mock of? *[To JOHN FERGUSON]* Ah, didn't I tell you what he would do? Didn't I, now? *[He turns to the others]* Didn't I, Mrs Ferguson?

John Ferguson Go on, daughter!

Hannah Ferguson He said he supposed it couldn't be helped, and I was just coming away when he said he would walk the length of the loanie with me, and I waited for him *[Her voice grows feeble]* We were walking along, talking about one thing and another

John Ferguson *[nervously]* Ay, ay!

Hannah Ferguson And he begun telling me what a fine girl I am, and wishing he could kiss me!

James Caesar God starve him!

Hannah Ferguson And then he tried to kiss me, but I wouldn't let him We were going over Musgrave's meadow together, and all of a sudden he put his arms round me and threw me down! Oh, da, da! *[Her grief overcomes her again, and she buries her head against his breast and is unable to speak further]*

James Caesar What did she say, John? What was it she said?

John Ferguson *[brokenly]* I can't speak, Jimmy—I can't speak Hannah, dear! *[He tries to comfort her]*

James Caesar Did he wrong her? That's what I want to know!

Sarah Ferguson Oh, will we never have comfort in the world! John, does she mean that he harmed her harmed her? *[Wildly to the others]* One of you do something! Andrew! Jimmy!!

James Caesar I've sworn many's a time to have his life and never done it I was a poor, trembling creature, but I'll tremble no more! *[He goes to the door]* Good-night to you all!

John Ferguson Where are you going, Jimmy?

James Caesar I'm going—somewhere!



*John Ferguson* Sit down, Jimmy  
*James Caesar.* It's no good you talking to me, John! [*He opens the door violently and goes out*]

*John Ferguson* Andrew, go after him and bring him back There's enough harm done already Go and stop him, son!

[*ANDREW goes unwillingly to the door He stands there looking up the dark loamie*]

*Andrew Ferguson* I can't see him!

*John Ferguson* You must be able to see him He can't be that far! Go after him, man, and bring him back here

*Andrew Ferguson.* No, da, I won't [*He shuts the door and returns to his seat*] The man has a right to be left to himself

*John Ferguson* Andrew! [*He tries to get up from his chair, but is prevented by HANNAH'S weight*] Here, Sarah, take Hannah and put her to bed Get up, daughter!

*Hannah Ferguson* [*clinging to him*] Da, da!

*John Ferguson* Ay, daughter, ay! God's scourged us hard, and it isn't easy to bear We must just . . . just try and be patient [*Kissing her*] Go to your ma, dear, and let her take care of you!

*Sarah Ferguson* Come to your bed, Hannah!

[*HANNAH'S anguish unbalances her, and she becomes hysterical, and stands clinging to her father and weeping bitterly*]

*John Ferguson* [*comforting her*] You must control yourself, daughter Go with your ma, now, like a good girl Take her, Sarah!

[*MRS FERGUSON leads her daughter towards the stairs They go out*]

*Andrew Ferguson* I hope Jimmy'll kill him

*John Ferguson* [*weakly*] Son, son, don't talk that way!

*Andrew Ferguson* I can't help it, da He ought to be killed He's not fit to live

*John Ferguson* Are you setting yourself up to judge God's work?

*Andrew Ferguson* An eye for an eye, da, and a tooth for a tooth!

*John Ferguson* That's not the spirit that lives now, son! That's the spirit that was destroyed on the Cross If a man does an injury to you, and you injure him back, you're as bad as he is You have your own work to do in the world, and you must leave

God to do His, it's His work to judge not ours! [*His utterance exhausts him little, and he staggers back into his chair His voice changes to a pleading note*] A

Andrew, son, don't never talk that way again! I meant you for the ministry, teach people how to live for God! You can't go into the ministry now, son, but you can teach people just the same, just the same! I would rather you were dead than hear you speak about Jimmy Caesar the way you're doing . . . [*He gets up from his chair and goes to his son, taking him by the shoulder*] Will you not go out and look for him, son? He has suffered enough poor man, without him damning his soul!

*Andrew Ferguson* He can bear God's strokes as well as we can!

*John Ferguson* Your heart's bitter, son I wish I could go! [*He staggers towards the door*] I haven't the strength I used to have

Andrew, will you not do as I bid you?

*Andrew Ferguson* No, da, I won't interfere between them

*John Ferguson* I must go myself, then must try and find him

[*MRS FERGUSON comes down the stairs into the kitchen*]

*Sarah Ferguson* John!

*John Ferguson* Ay, woman!

*Sarah Ferguson* Hannah wants you She not be quiet without you near her

*John Ferguson* I can't go up to her yet, Sarah. I'm going out to look for Jimmy Caesar I can't let him be wandering about wild in the night If he finds Witherow, he'll mebbe do him an injury [*He turns towards the door again*] Andrew won't go, so I must I can't let that man destroy himself

*Sarah Ferguson* What way's that to talking and you the sick you are? Is your death you're wanting? And no concern or nothing [*To her son*] Andrew, think of the shame of yourself to be letting your daughter go out in the dark and damp! [*To her husband*] You must come to Hannah She won't keep still without you! [*To ANDREW*] You go and look for Jimmy, Andrew The poor creature's near distracted mad, and he knows in that state he might do something fearful

*Andrew Ferguson* [*sullenly*] I'm not going, ma I've told my da that already

*Sarah Ferguson* Ah, aren't you hear

strong? [*To her husband*] Come up to Hannah first, John!

*John Ferguson* She must wait till I come back. It's Jimmy Caesar that's in the greatest danger now. I'll come to her when I get back, tell her!

*Sarah Ferguson* You'll rue this night, the pair of you, but you must have your own way, I suppose!

*John Ferguson* Give me my coat, woman!

[*MRS FERGUSON goes to get his coat for him*]

Andrew, will you not come with me and help me to find him?

*Andrew Ferguson* I'll not budge out of the door, da. I wouldn't lift a finger to stop him from doing anything he wants to do.

[*MRS FERGUSON returns to the kitchen carrying a jacket, a topcoat, and a muffler*]

It's no business of mine to interfere between them.

*Sarah Ferguson* [*helping her husband into his coat*] Muffle yourself up well, John. It's cold the night.

*John Ferguson* Ay, Sarah, thank you. [*He puts the muffler round his throat*]

*Andrew Ferguson* I only hope Jimmy'll have the manhood to kill Witherow!

*John Ferguson* [*in pain*] Wheesht wheesht, son! Wheesht, adear! [*He recovers himself, and turns to his wife*] Tell Hannah where I'm gone, Sarah! That'll mebbe keep her quiet till I get back! [*He opens the door*] I'll come as soon as I can! [*He goes out, closing the door behind him*]

*Sarah Ferguson* It'll kill him, this night's work! Andrew, how can you stand there and see your da going out in the wet and dark, and you knowing well the sick and feeble he is!

*Andrew Ferguson* I can't stop him from going, can I?

*Sarah Ferguson* You could have gone yourself.

*Andrew Ferguson* [*turning to her and speaking fiercely*] I tell you I don't want to stop Jimmy from killing Witherow if he's going to do it. It's right that he should kill him. The man's bad from head to foot. Everything about him shows that! It isn't only the way he's treated us, but others too. You've told me yourself many's a time, and my da's told me too, of the cuts

and insults Jimmy's had to bear from him! Isn't this greater nor the lot of them put together? Hasn't Jimmy a right to turn on him now if he never had the right before? I don't care what my da says! Jimmy has the right to turn on him and kill him if he can.

*Sarah Ferguson* [*bewildered by the catastrophe in which she is involved*] I'm all moidhered by it. I don't understand what's happening. Your da says it's the will of God, but I—I can't make it out. [*She goes towards the stairs*] I'll mebbe not come down again, Andrew. Good-night, son!

*Andrew Ferguson* Good-night, ma!

[*MRS FERGUSON goes upstairs. ANDREW walks across the room and opens the door. He looks out for a moment or two. Then he shuts the door and walks back to the fireplace*]

*Clutie John* Your da's a forgiving man, Andrew!

*Andrew Ferguson* [*absently*] Eh?

*Clutie John* I say, your da's a forgiving man!

*Andrew Ferguson* [*carelessly*] Oh, ay! [*He walks across the room and back again*]

*Clutie John* You're not a forgiving man, are you, Andrew?

[*ANDREW sits down at the table. He does not reply to CLUTIE JOHN*]

*Clutie John* You're not a forgiving man, are you, Andrew? [*He gets up and comes to the table*] You wouldn't forgive till seventy times seven, would you?

*Andrew Ferguson* [*impatiently*] Ah, quit!

*Clutie John* Your da has a quare good nature. He always says you should turn the other cheek to the man that harms you. That's a great spirit to have, that, isn't it?

*Andrew Ferguson* [*who has not been listening*] Eh? What's that you say?

*Clutie John* I was talking about your da, Andrew, and him having the great fine spirit of forgiveness in him.

*Andrew Ferguson* [*indifferently*] Oh, ay! Ay!

*Clutie John* I could never be as forgiving as your da if I lived to be a thousand years old. [*He pauses for a moment, and then says eagerly*] Will I play some thing to you?

[*Andrew does not make any movement*]

Are you not listening to me?

*Andrew Ferguson* [*crossly*] Ah, what is it? What's the matter with you?

*Clutie John* Will I not play something to you? It's a great comfort when you're in trouble to hear a man playing a tune.

*Andrew Ferguson* [*sharply*] Quit blethering!

*Clutie John* [*going back to his seat at the fire*] I was only wondering could I do anything to please you, Andrew? But I'll keep still and quiet I'll not disturb you at all

[*They sit in silence for a few moments*]

*Clutie John* He's a bad man, that man Witherow! That's what he is! He has a sour nature in him Whenever he meets me, he makes a mock of me and says, "When are they going to put you in the asylum, Clutie?" Sometimes he hits me with his stick or a whip mebbe He done that the day there forment your own door, Andrew! He couped me into the hedge and near broke my whistle on me That shows the bad-natured man he is to be hurting a poor fellow like myself that has to beg his bread from door to door!

*Andrew Ferguson* Hold your tongue, will you?

*Clutie John* [*meekly*] All right, Andrew! I was only saying what he done to me, but, sure, it doesn't matter what he does to the like of me, a poor senseless fellow that wanders the world with a whistle! It's quare and different, Andrew, when he does harm to a girl like Hannah

*Andrew Ferguson* [*turning to him and speaking quickly*] Ay, it is different, Clutie! You're right there My sister is the finest girl in the County Down

*Clutie John* [*eagerly*] Ay, she is, Andrew She is in sang There isn't her equal in the province of Ulster There is not I've oftentimes heard people talking about her, and saying what a fine match she'll make for some man, and one time I tried to make up a song about her to be singing on the roads, but I couldn't do it with any satisfaction to myself I'm no hand at making up poetry She's a fine young girl and a great companion she'll be to any one

*Andrew Ferguson* It's only a fine man that's fit for her

*Clutie John* That's true! [*He gets up and*

*comes to the table and leans across it*] It would never have done if she'd married Jimmy Caesar The mountains can never consort with the hills

*Andrew Ferguson* No! No!! I wasn't best pleased about the match when I heard of it

*Clutie John* He's not much of a man, Jimmy Caesar!

*Andrew Ferguson* No, he isn't indeed!

*Clutie John* He's a poor-natured man, that's what he is He'd be worse nor Witherow if he had the pluck Mebbe he is worse nor him, for he has no pluck at all He's a mean man

*Andrew Ferguson* I daresay you're right [*He goes to the fire and stands with his back to it*]

*Clutie John* Ay, I am He'd beat you on the ground that lad would, but he would run away from you if you were to stand up to him That's the kind he is

*Andrew Ferguson* Ah, well, he's had a poor life of it

*Clutie John* He'd have been mean-natured whatever kind of a life he had, Andrew! I've seen men like him before in my time They think I'm a fool and see nothing, but when I'm playing my whistle, Andrew, I see them when they're not thinking I'm looking at them—and there's plenty of them, high up and low down, that are crawling when they're at your feet and are ready to crawl when they're standing up That's the way of them A man like Jimmy Caesar would be a poor defender for Hannah!

*Andrew Ferguson* Mebbe he would!

*Clutie John* I'd be afeard to trust myself to him if I was in need of a person to take care of me I would so

*Andrew Ferguson* Ah, you can take care of yourself! Quit talking now, or if you can't keep quiet, go out to the hayloft and talk to yourself [*He goes half-way across the room and then returns to the fire He stands with his face to it*]

*Clutie John* [*after a pause*] I wonder will Jimmy Caesar kill Witherow?

*Andrew Ferguson* What makes you wonder that?

*Clutie John* I was just wondering! [*He turns towards the door*] I'd better be going to my bed It was kind of your ma to give me leave to sleep in the loft It'll be nice

and comfortable to stretch myself out on the hay

*Andrew Ferguson* Ay Good-night

*Clutie John* Good-night to you, Andrew [*He looks back to his seat*] Ah, dear bless us, I was near forgetting my whistle! [*He goes to his seat and picks up the whistle*] It's not a great deal to look at, but it can play a grand tune! [*He puts it in his pocket*] I wouldn't be surprised but Caesar doesn't do it!

*Andrew Ferguson* [*abstractedly*] Doesn't do what?

*Clutie John* Kill Witherow

*Andrew Ferguson* What makes you think that?

*Clutie John* It's the way of him to be talking and not doing

*Andrew Ferguson* Ah, man, but this is different

*Clutie John* You can't help your nature, Andrew No one can Jimmy Caesar's always been afeard of Henry Witherow, and it's likely he always will be He can't help it, God be good to him!

*Andrew Ferguson* [*thinking this over for a second, and then turning away contemptuously*] Ah, you don't know what you're talking about!

*Clutie John* No No, Andrew, that's true! I have no sense in my head at all I've oftentimes been told that Good-night again to you, Andrew!

*Andrew Ferguson* Good-night!

*Clutie John* [*before he reaches the door*] Mind you, Jimmy Caesar'll mean to kill him! I daresay he will And mebbe he would have killed him if he had been standing forment him that minute, with his back turned, but he had to go out and find him, Andrew! It's a good step from here to Witherow's farm, and he had to get a gun or something You have time to think when you're going that length

*Andrew Ferguson* Ay

*Clutie John* I wouldn't doubt but he went home I daresay he's lying huddled up in his bed this minute, Andrew, and your poor old da hunting for him in the dark, and your sister up there weeping her eyes out

*Andrew Ferguson* Ah, quit, man, quit! You're tormenting me with your talk

*Clutie John* A fine girl like Hannah to be depending on Jimmy Caesar for a man

*Andrew Ferguson* Go on with you, go on!

*Clutie John* And him mebbe at home all the time, snuggled up in his bed!

*Andrew Ferguson* What do you mean, Clutie? What are you trying to prove?

*Clutie John* Prove? Me? Sure, I couldn't prove anything if I was paid to do it I'm no hand at proving things That's why I haven't got any sense

*Andrew Ferguson* [*going to him and taking hold of his shoulder*] What's all this talk about Jimmy Caesar mean? You have some meaning in your mind!

*Clutie John* I wish I had, but sure I'll never be right, never I'll always be quare

*Andrew Ferguson* [*turning away from him in disgust*] Och, away with you! [*He goes back to the fire, standing with his face to it*] You have as much talk as Jimmy Caesar himself!

[*CLUTIE JOHN stands still for a few moments Then he steps lightly across the floor to where ANDREW is sitting and taps him on the shoulder*]

*Clutie John* Andrew!

*Andrew Ferguson* What ails you now?

*Clutie John* Supposing Jimmy Caesar doesn't kill Witherow?

*Andrew Ferguson* Well? Well, well?

*Clutie John* That 'u'd be fearful, wouldn't it? Can't you picture Witherow sitting up there in his hungry house laughing to himself

*Andrew Ferguson* My God, Clutie!

*Clutie John* And mebbe saying he'll look out for Hannah again!

*Andrew Ferguson* Aw, my God, my God!

*Clutie John* And making a mock of Jimmy Caesar, the way he always does, and calling him an old Jenny-Jo that'll stand by and let another man do harm to his girl

*Andrew Ferguson* Ah, wheesht with you, wheesht!

*Clutie John* And telling people about it! Ay, telling people about it! You can see him with his great jaw hanging down and him roaring with laughter and telling them all in Jefferson public-house on the fair-day!

*Andrew Ferguson* Ay, indeed, that's what he'd do!

*Clutie John* That's what he done over the head of Martha Foley that had the child

to him Didn't I hear him myself, telling them all about it, and them splitting their sides and calling him the great lad and the gallous boy and the terrible man for women? And then mebbe him to be telling them how your da, that's near his death, went out to try and stop Jimmy from killing him, and all the while your da was tumbling over the dark fields Jimmy was lying trembling with fright in his bed, afeard to move . . .

*Andrew Ferguson* He'd never be such a collie as that, Clutie He couldn't for shame

*Clutie John* [coming nearer to him] If I was Hannah's brother, I'd make sure!

*Andrew Ferguson* Make sure! What do you mean?

*Clutie John* Ah, what do I mean? Sure, I don't know what I'm saying half my time! I'm all throughother I don't know what I mean, Andrew, I don't know God reward you, and I'll bid you good-night I'll go up to the loft and play a while to myself Sure, I'll disturb no one there but the cows mebbe in the byre, and God knows the poor beasts 'll not complain if a poor fellow like myself has a small diversion And when I lie down and stretch myself in the hay, I can be thinking mebbe Jimmy Caesar is lying in a fine warm bed, and be pitying your da that's out looking for him, and be cursing Henry Witherow that's mebbe laughing now and making up great stories to be telling on the fair-day

*Andrew Ferguson* Are you trying to drive me demented?

*Clutie John* Wheesht, wheesht!

[MRS FERGUSON comes down the stairs]

*Sarah Ferguson* Will you not keep quiet, the pair of you? I'm trying hard to get Hannah asleep, but the clatter you're making would wake the dead! Is your da not back yet, Andrew?

*Andrew Ferguson* No, ma, not yet!

*Sarah Ferguson* [picking up JIMMY CAESAR's coat] Dear bless us, Jimmy left his coat behind him He'll be sure to get his death of cold, for he always had a delicate chest [She puts the coat aside] I wish you'd go and find your da, Andrew, and bring him home It's no time of the night for him to be wandering about in the cold air Hannah'll never rest without him near

her Will you not go now and find him, son?

*Andrew Ferguson* All right, ma!

*Sarah Ferguson* That's a good son Tell him to come home as quick as he can Clutie John'll stay here while you look for him [She listens for a moment] That's Hannah crying again! I can't leave her for a minute but she begins lamenting .

[She goes hurriedly upstairs again ANDREW goes to the door and looks out. He is followed by CLUTIE JOHN]

*Clutie John* Look, Andrew, there's a light in Witherow's window Do you see it over there on the side of the hill? It shines down the valley a long way Do you see it, Andrew?

*Andrew Ferguson* Ay

*Clutie John* It doesn't look as if Jimmy'd got there, does it? The light's still shining

*Andrew Ferguson* He might be there for all that

*Clutie John* Mebbe! Ay, mebbe! Well, I'll away on now to my bed The night's turned sharp, and I feel tired and sleepy [He stands in the doorway, gazing up at the sky] There's a lot of wee stars out the night, Andrew, but no moon

*Andrew Ferguson* Ay

*Clutie John* I oftentimes think it must be quare and lonely up in the sky Good-night to you, Andrew!

*Andrew Ferguson* Good-night, Clutie

[CLUTIE JOHN goes out ANDREW FERGUSON stands still, watching the light in WITHEROW'S window Then a great anger goes over him He mutters something to himself, and turns suddenly into the kitchen He takes down the gun and, after examining it to see if it is loaded, he goes out In a few moments SARAH FERGUSON is heard calling to him from the top of the stairs]

*Sarah Ferguson* Andrew! Andrew!! Are you there? [She comes down part of the staircase and looks over the banisters] Are you there, Andrew? Clutie! [She comes into the kitchen and looks about her] Clutie! [She goes to the foot of the stairs and calls up to HANNAH] It's all right, Hannah, dear! Andrew's away to fetch your da! [She goes to the door and looks out for a few moments Then she closes the door and goes up the stairs again]

## ACT THREE

*It is early in the morning of the following day The room is bright and cheery because a fine sunshine pours in at the window and open door There is nothing in the appearance of the kitchen to indicate that any unusual thing has happened, the gun is again suspended over the fire-place* MRS FERGUSON *is bending over the fire, settling a kettle on the coals and turf, when her husband comes into the kitchen from the staircase*

Sarah Ferguson Is that you, John?

John Ferguson Ay [*He seats himself by the fire*] Where's Andrew?

Sarah Ferguson He's away out to the byre Will I call him?

John Ferguson, Ay, do!

[MRS FERGUSON goes to the door and calls out "Andrew! Andrew!" ANDREW is heard to shout, "What do you want, ma?" and MRS FERGUSON replies, "Your da wants you a minute!" ANDREW shouts back, "I'll be in in a wee while" MRS FERGUSON returns to the fire]

Sarah Ferguson He says he'll be in in a minute Did you get your rest, John?

John Ferguson I couldn't sleep at all, I lay still and closed my eyes, but my mind was working all the time I kept on wondering where Jimmy went to last night I suppose no one has come up the loanie with news?

Sarah Ferguson There's been no one next or near this place this morning but ourselves and Clutie John I gave him his breakfast and sent him packing He was in a quare wild mood, that lad, and could hardly contain himself for excitement

John Ferguson I daresay he was greatly disturbed in his mind after what happened yesterday Them people is quare and easily excited I wish Andrew would come! Is Hannah up yet?

Sarah Ferguson Indeed I don't know I didn't call her this morning She was a long while getting her sleep, and so I just let her be on She'll be all the better for the rest

John Ferguson Ay I can't make out where Jimmy went to last night I thought mebbe he'd go straight to Witherow from

here, and so I went there first, but I didn't see him

Sarah Ferguson Did you see Witherow?

John Ferguson Ay I warned him about Jimmy

Sarah Ferguson You warned him?

John Ferguson Ay

Sarah Ferguson And you never laid a finger on him?

John Ferguson No

Sarah Ferguson Well, indeed, I can't make you out, John! There's a man's harmed your daughter, and you didn't as much as lift your hand to him! You went and warned him about Jimmy! Oh, John, I can't understand you! It doesn't seem right someway to be acting like that!

John Ferguson God's Word says I must love my enemies, Sarah That is my guide in all I do It's hard to obey that commandment, and when I was standing there in front of Witherow, I was tempted to take a hold of him and do him an injury but I resisted the temptation, and I did what God bid me I wasn't able to love him, but I warned him I could do no more than that but God 'll mebbe understand!

Sarah Ferguson [*sighing*] Ah, well! It's a quare way to look at things If any one was to hurt me, I'd do my best to hurt them back, and hurt them harder nor they hurt me That would learn them!

John Ferguson Would it? Men's been hitting back since the beginning of the world, but hitting back has learned no one anything but hatred and bitterness

Sarah Ferguson What did you do after you saw Witherow?

John Ferguson I went down to Jimmy's shop, but he wasn't there I dundhered on the door, but I could get no answer Matt Kerr put his head out of his window, but he couldn't tell me a thing about Jimmy I didn't know what to do after that! I wandered about in the dark for a while, and then I went back to the shop, but he still wasn't there! I was feeling tired, and I sat down for a wee while, thinking mebbe Jimmy would turn up while I was waiting, but he didn't, and so I came home

Sarah Ferguson You might have got your death of cold sitting there in the damp It's a wonder to me you never knocked against Andrew!

*John Ferguson* Ay, it is, but sure it's easy to miss people when it isn't light

[*ANDREW FERGUSON enters by the door*  
There is a sombre look on his face It is not the darkness of a man who is horrified by his own deed, but the darkness of a man who has set himself willingly to do some desperate work that must be done]

*Andrew Ferguson* You were wanting me, da?

*John Ferguson* Ay, Andrew! [regarding his son closely] You're looking tired, son!

*Andrew Ferguson* I am tired, but sure we all are Da, you ought not to have got up this morning You're not strong, and you must nearly be worn out

*John Ferguson* I couldn't rest, son Andrew, I want you to go and inquire about Jimmy Caesar I'll not be easy in my mind till I see him safe and sound I feel my own responsibility, son. I'll admit to you I was hoping Hannah 'd marry him, and I didn't discourage her from saying "yes" to him when he asked her, for all I knew she was only doing it for the farm I knew the girl couldn't bear him, but I pretended to myself it would all come right in the end I . . . I love this house, Andrew! That's the excuse I have for not being honest with Hannah .

*Sarah Ferguson* Ah, sure, you left it to her own free will

*John Ferguson* Ay, I tried to salve my conscience that way, but I said it in a way that showed plain what my desire was If I had been firm, there would have been none of this bother now You understand me, son, don't you? I feel I won't be happy till I see Jimmy safe and sound from harm, because I put him in danger. God knows what would happen if he was to meet Witherow in the temper he was in last night

*Andrew Ferguson* I daresay he's all right, da!

*John Ferguson* I'd be glad if you'd go all the same and search for him, Andrew

*Sarah Ferguson* Just go to please him, Andrew His mind's upset about Jimmy, and there'll be no contenting him till he sees him

*Andrew Ferguson* It'll put the work on the farm behind, da .

*John Ferguson* That doesn't matter, son

*Andrew Ferguson* but I'll go to please you!

*John Ferguson* Thank you, son!

*Andrew Ferguson* There's no need for you to be uneasy about him, though You may be sure Jimmy's come to no harm We all know rightly the kind he is Mebbe he's lying snug in his bed this minute, moaning and groaning, and saying what he'd do to Witherow one of these days, but you know as well as you're living he'll never do it

*John Ferguson* I'd liefer he was a collie a thousand times over nor have him take a man's life

*Andrew Ferguson* Even after what Witherow's done?

*John Ferguson* Ay, son Witherow will have to make his answer to God, and God will deal justly with him We can't do that No one can do justice to a man that's done an injury to them We'd be thinking all the time of our trouble and wanting revenge We wouldn't be striving hard, the way God would, to understand everything

*Andrew Ferguson* There's no need to be striving to understand everything, da It's a plain matter that a child can understand The man done wrong, and he has a right to suffer for it

*John Ferguson.* Ay, son, he'll suffer for it, but that's the work of his Maker, and not the work of Jimmy Caesar or you or me or any man You're wrong, Andrew, when you say there's nothing to understand There's everything to understand There's the man himself to understand Do you think that Jimmy Caesar can judge Henry Witherow when he doesn't know him as God knows him?

*Andrew Ferguson* [impatiently] I've no time or patience for that kind of talk If Jimmy Caesar killed him he was right to kill him . only I don't suppose he did

*John Ferguson* Don't you see now, Andrew, that you're not fit to judge Henry Witherow either? You can't judge a man if you have anger in your heart against him You must love him before you can do justly by him

*Andrew Ferguson* Och, quit, da!

*John Ferguson* And that's what God does, Andrew! God's something that sees inside you and knows every bit of you and never has no spite against you. Do you under-



stand me, son? He judges you, but He doesn't punish you. He just gives knowledge to you so that you see yourself as He sees you, and that's your punishment, Andrew, if you've done wrong. It's knowing yourself as God knows you that hurts you harder nor anything else in the world. Do you think Henry Witherow 'll be happy when he sees himself with God's eyes? I wouldn't be that man on the last day for the wealth of the world! . . . I'm all moidhered, Andrew, and I'm a poor hand at saying what's in my mind, but I know well that if Henry Witherow wronged me a thousand times more nor he has, I'd be doing God's will if I knelt down and kissed his feet.

*Andrew Ferguson* I don't understand that kind of religion.

*Sarah Ferguson* Here's some one coming up the loanie. I can hear their steps. [*She goes to the door as she speaks*] It's Jimmy!

*John Ferguson* Jimmy Caesar?

*Sarah Ferguson* Ay.

*John Ferguson* Oh, thank God, thank God, he's come at last!

[*JAMES CAESAR enters. The look of assurance has completely gone, and so, too, has some of the meanness. He has the look of a man who has suffered great shame and humiliation, and although he feels mean, he does not look so mean as he did at the beginning of the play.*]

*Sarah Ferguson* Come in, Jimmy, come in! Sure, we're all right and glad to see you again!

*John Ferguson* [*going to him and wringing his hand*] Ay, Jimmy, we are, indeed. I'm glad this minute to see you safe from harm. Sit down, man!

[*He leads CAESAR to a chair, and CAESAR sits down.*]

You must be worn out.

[*JAMES CAESAR glances about the room for a moment. Then he bows his head on the table and begins to cry hysterically.*]

Ay, man, you'll want to cry after the trouble you've had.

*Andrew Ferguson* [*contemptuously*] My God, what a man!

*John Ferguson* It's the reaction, son, that's what it is. He can't help himself. Nobody could.

*Sarah Ferguson* A drink of tea 'll do him

a world of good. The kettle's on, and I'll have the tea wet in no time at all. [*She goes to CALSAR and pats him on the back.*] There, there, Jimmy, keep your heart up! Sure, we all know the troubles you've had to bear. Just put a good face on it, and you'll be as happy as you like.

*James Caesar* I'm a disgraced man!

*John Ferguson* No, no, no, Jimmy!

*James Caesar* [*raising his head*] Ay, I am, John. I'm a disgraced man! I heard what Andrew said to you a minute ago, and he was right. "My God," he said, "what a man!"

*Sarah Ferguson* Ah, sure, Andrew didn't mean it, Jimmy. Don't be paying no heed to him.

*Andrew Ferguson* [*angrily*]. I did mean it.

*John Ferguson* That's poor comfort, Andrew, to be offering to a broken man. I'd be ashamed to say that to any one.

*James Caesar* [*as if eager to make little of himself*] But it's true, John, for all that I've failed another time.

*John Ferguson* It was God that checked you, Jimmy.

*James Caesar* I went out of this house last night with my mind set on killing Witherow. If I'd met him in the loanie I'd 'a' throttled him there and then.

*John Ferguson* I'm thankful you didn't meet him!

*James Caesar* [*rambling on*] . . . I was near demented with rage, and I hardly knew what I was doing. I started off for his farm. I could see the light in his front room shining down the glen, and it drew me towards it. I was that mad I didn't care what I done. I scrambled through the hedges and tore my hands and face with the thorns. Look at the cuts on my hands! [*He holds out his hands for inspection.*]

*John Ferguson*, Ay, ay.

*James Caesar* But I didn't care what happened to me. I felt nothing but the desire to get Witherow dead. I went across the fields, tumbling over stooks of corn, and slipping in puddles and drains till I come near the farm, and then I remembered I had nothing to kill him with.

*Andrew Ferguson* [*sneering*] Ha!

*James Caesar* [*turning to ANDREW*] I'm no match for him, Andrew, and if I'd gone into the house then, he'd have thrown me into the yard before I could have lifted



a finger to him [*Insisting on his weakness*] I haven't the strength, Andrew, and I've a poor spirit. It wouldn't have been a fair fight if I'd gone in then, and me with no weapon, would it, Andrew? Would it, John? I hadn't even a sally rod in my hands!

*Sarah Ferguson* He's stronger nor you by a good piece, Jimmy

*James Caesar* Yes, Mrs Ferguson! That's what I said to myself I said, "I'll have no chance against him if I go without a weapon!" That's what I said to myself I made up my mind I'd go back to the shop to get my gun, and then I'd come back again to the farm and I'd shoot him dead

*John Ferguson* Aw, horrible, horrible

*Andrew Ferguson* And why didn't you go back again?

*James Caesar* [*miserably*] You've guessed right, Andrew I never went near the place again I got to the shop and I went in quietly and got the gun, and then I come out again I had hardly got across the doorstep when I began to feel afeard, and I could feel the gun shaking in my hands as I gripped it I went a bit of the way along the road, and I kept thinking some one was watching me, and then all of a sudden I started to run, and I run and I run till I come to the planting I went in among the trees, and before I knew where I was I tripped over something on the ground and the gun went off in my hands I was scared of my life for fear any one would hear it, and I got up and left the gun on the ground, and I run on through the trees like a wild thing till I could run no more. Then I crawled in under a whin-bush, and I hid there till this morning I lay there cursing myself for a collic, and trying to stir myself up to go and kill him in the daylight but I couldn't do it I kept on making excuses That's the sort of me, John! I'm always imagining myself doing grand things, and seeing people clapping me and making speeches about me, and printing things in the papers because of my greatness and my gallantry, but if a cow was to make a run at me in the fields, I'd be near scared to death of it It's bad enough, Andrew, to know that other people are ashamed of you, but it's hell to be ashamed of yourself, the way I am this minute, and it's hell to have dreams of

yourself doing big things, and you knowing rightly you'll never have the pluck to do a wee thing, let alone a big one

*John Ferguson* There's many a thing that a lad like Andrew might think was big, but it's quare and small

*James Caesar* It's kind of you to talk the way you do, John, but it's poor comfort to a man that knows he's as poor-spirited as myself If Hannah was married on me now, I feel I would leave her in the lurch if she needed my help any time That's the way of me, and I knew it well last night when I was hiding under the whin-bush I'm not like you, John Ferguson, that has no hatred in your heart, and can forgive a man that does an injury to you I'm full of hate, and I want to hurt them that hurts me, but I haven't the courage to do it

*Andrew Ferguson* Well, there's no use in sitting here talking about it

*James Caesar* No, Andrew, there isn't I come here this morning to excuse myself to Hannah and all of you I thought that was the least I could do

*John Ferguson* No, no, Jimmy, no, no! I'm right and glad you didn't harm Witherow I'd have been sore-hearted if you had

*Sarah Ferguson* He went out to search for you last night, Jimmy

*James Caesar* Who? John?

*Sarah Ferguson* Ay

*Andrew Ferguson* He searched the place for you A sick man went out to try and prevent a strong, able-bodied man from doing what he ought to have done, and while the sick man was wearing himself out with the search, the strong man was hiding underneath a whin-bush in mortal fear of his life! [*His voice grows in anger and contempt as he speaks*]

*James Caesar* [*miserably*] Oh, my God, my God!

*John Ferguson* Wheesht, Andrew, wheesht! Jimmy, man, it's not like the thing for you to give way in that fashion! Control yourself, man! I'm as happy this minute as ever I've been in my life, because I know God's saved you from sinning your soul with a murder I'm proud to think you wouldn't kill Witherow

*James Caesar* [*in a misery of self-abasement*] But I'm not saved from sin, John I didn't leave Witherow alone because I didn't want to kill him I did want to kill

him I left him alone because I was afeard to touch him My mind's the same now as it was when I went out of this house last night with murder in my heart I want Witherow to be dead I'd be glad this minute if some one came in the door there and told me he was dead But I'd be afeard to lay a finger on him myself That's the cowardliest thing of all, to want to commit a sin and not have the courage to do it Do you think God'll be gratified when he thinks I didn't kill Witherow because I was too big a colle to do it?

*Sarah Ferguson* Well, quit talking about it, anyway Make yourself content while I get you a bite to eat

*James Caesar* I couldn't taste it It 'ud choke me

*Sarah Ferguson* Now, a drop of tea never choked no one The kettle's boiling, and it'll not take me a minute to make a cup of good warm tea for you You must be perished with the cold, and you lying out on the damp grass all night Just content yourself while I spread the table [*She sets about preparing the meal*]

*James Caesar* [*in whom confession has now grown to something like a craving*] I know rightly you have contempt for me, Andrew

[*ANDREW stands at the window with his back to the others He does not answer*]

I know you have Anybody would [*To JOHN FERGUSON*] Hannah'll have the quare contempt for me, too There'll be plenty will, and they'll be pointing at me and making remarks about me It'll be quare and hard for me to hold up my head again after this It will, in sang [*His voice changes its note slightly as he begins to speculate on his conduct*] You know, it's quare the way things turn out! Yesterday, after Hannah said she'd have me, I was having the great notions of myself and her I imagined myself prospering greatly, and Andrew here doing well in the branch I was going to open at Ballymaclurg, and then I thought to myself I'd mebbe get made a magistrate

*Andrew Ferguson* [*scornfully*] Ha! Ha, ha!

*James Caesar* Well, Andrew, there's many that's not so well reared as myself that are made magistrates this day, and can send fellows like Clutie John to jail for a month

and more for being without visible means of subsistence

*Andrew Ferguson* Ay, indeed, that sort of a job would suit you rightly! You could be doing an injury to other people without running any risk yourself! By my sang, Jimmy, you ought to be a magistrate! Mebbe, if you were one now, you'd fine Witherow forty shillings for what he done to Hannah! [*In great fury*] Ah, you make me feel sick! I'll go out in the air a while and be quit of you I'm near stifled in here! [*He goes out violently*]

*James Caesar* There you are, John! That's the kind of contempt I'll have to thole from people after this Hannah's tongue is bitterer nor Andrew's and she'll be harder to bear nor him

*Sarah Ferguson* [*completing the arrangements for the meal*] Well, indeed, it's easy enough to bear the weight of a person's tongue You'll come to small harm, Jimmy Caesar, if that's all the trouble you have Sit up, now, and take your breakfast!

*James Caesar* [*drawing his chair closer to the table*] It's kind and thoughtful of you, Mrs Ferguson, but I've no appetite at all.

*Sarah Ferguson* Ah, wheesht with you!

*James Caesar* I'll only take the tea [*He begins to eat his breakfast*]

*Sarah Ferguson* Draw up, John, to the table! I wonder ought I to call Andrew in or let him have his after a wee while

*John Ferguson* [*coming to the table*] Leave him for the present His mind's disturbed

*Sarah Ferguson* Very well [*She goes to the foot of the stairs*] Hannah! [*She pauses, and then calls again*] Hannah!

*James Caesar* You're not bringing her down, are you?

*Sarah Ferguson* She has to have her food the same as yourself [*She calls again*] Are you up yet, Hannah!

*Hannah Ferguson* [*upstairs*] Ay, ma

*Sarah Ferguson* Well, come down and have your breakfast [*She returns to the table and sits down*]

*John Ferguson* Mebbe she'd better have hers upstairs

*Sarah Ferguson* No, indeed, she won't have it upstairs There's no good of her sitting up there crying her eyes out The world has to go on just the same as ever, no matter what happens What'll you have,

Jimmy? A piece of soda or a piece of wheaten farl? I baked the soda yesterday

*James Caesar* Ah, I couldn't touch it

*Sarah Ferguson* [putting bread on his plate] Well, just take it on your plate anyway, and if you have a fancy for it after a while, it'll be convenient to you John, what'll you have?

[HANNAH descends the stairs]

Ah, is that you at last, Hannah? Come on here and have your breakfast! Do you see Jimmy Caesar?

*Hannah Ferguson* Ay, ma Good-morning, Jimmy [She sits down beside her father]

*James Caesar* Good-morning to you, Hannah

*John Ferguson* [kissing HANNAH affectionately] How're you, daughter?

*James Caesar* Hannah, I've come here this morning to make a confession to you!

*Sarah Ferguson* Well, eat your breakfast first

*James Caesar* I must tell her, Mrs Ferguson, before I take another bite Hannah, I went out last night to kill Henry Witherow, but when I was getting ready to kill him, I got afeard, and I run away and hid myself I come here this morning to tell you the poor sort of a man I am I daresay you're thankful you broke your word to me, for I'm not much of a support for any woman

*Hannah Ferguson* I don't want you to make no confession to me

*James Caesar* Ah, but I must Sure, I must tell people the way I feel That's the only thing that's left to me now Hannah, will you forgive me for not killing Witherow?

*Hannah Ferguson* I didn't ask you to kill him I had no call to ask you

*James Caesar* [on whom the mean manner has gradually been gaining control] If you're not angry with me, Hannah, then I'm glad I didn't do an injury to him If I had killed him, mebbe it would have done no good! I daresay you da's right! Sure, if I'd done anything to Witherow, I'd 'a' been put in jail, and my business that I've built up this long while would 'a' been sold on me, and mebbe I'd be hanged, and there'd be no good in that at all I wonder now is it not better to forget and forgive! Of course, if a man does wrong, he ought to be made to suffer for it That's only right, and if Witherow was brought before the magistrates . . .

[HANNAH gets up suddenly in distress]

*Hannah Ferguson* Oh, quit talking about it, quit talking! [She goes to the sofa and throws herself prone on it]

*Sarah Ferguson* [going to her] There, there, Hannah, don't be upsetting yourself! [She comforts HANNAH]

*James Caesar* That's the way of me again, John! I'm always raking things up! I wish now I had killed Witherow There'd be some satisfaction in that! Do you think Hannah'd marry me if I was to ask her again? I'd be willing to marry her just the same! [He turns to HANNAH] Hi, Hannah, do you hear that? I'm willing to marry you just the same if you'll have me! Will you?

[HANNAH still sobbing, does not reply]

*Sarah Ferguson* Hannah, dear, do you not hear Jimmy speaking to you?

*James Caesar* [getting up and going to HANNAH] Listen, Hannah! I was thinking as I was coming along that mebbe you'd have a poor opinion of me when you heard the way I'd behaved, but mebbe after all things has turned out for the best, and if you'll marry me I daresay we'll be as happy as any one [To MRS FERGUSON] Dear bless us, Mrs Ferguson, it's quare the way my mind alters every wee minute or so! I think one time I ought to have killed Witherow, and then I think another time I was right not to kill him, and one minute I'm ashamed of myself and another minute I'm near satisfied [To HANNAH] Are you listening to me, Hannah?

*John Ferguson* Don't trouble her now, Jimmy! Come and finish your breakfast

*James Caesar* Well, we can discuss it later [He returns to the table and begins his meal again] When I come in here this morning, I felt as if I could never put another bite of food in my mouth, and now I'm eating my breakfast as easy as anything How would you account for the like of that, John?

*John Ferguson* I can account for nothing, Jimmy, outside God's will

*James Caesar* [unctuously] Ah, that's true "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform"

[CLUTIE JOHN enters in a state of great excitement]

*Clutie John* Mr Ferguson! Mr Ferguson!!

*Sarah Ferguson* [starting up in alarm]

Ah, Clutie John, go 'long with you! You near startled me out of my wits! What do you want to come running in like that for? Go 'long with you, man! We don't want you here the day again!

*Clutie John [tensely]* I must tell you, I must tell you! Mr Ferguson! [*He sees JAMES CAESAR*] Oh, there's Mr Caesar!

*James Caesar* Have you never seen me before, you great gumph you, that you're standing there gaping at me like that?

*John Ferguson* What is it, Clutie? [*To JAMES CAESAR*] Don't be harsh with him, Jimmy! He's greatly upset after what happened yesterday

*James Caesar* All right! [*He goes on with his meal*]

*Clutie John* I've fearful news for you, Mr Ferguson! It's quare Mr Caesar should be here!

*James Caesar* What's quare about it?

*Clutie John [looking at him in an odd manner]* Didn't you kill Mr Witherow?

*James Caesar [rising in a fury]* Quit out of the place, damn you

*Clutie John [shrinking from CAESAR and running to JOHN FERGUSON]* Don't let him strike me, Mr Ferguson! I'm afeard of my life of him!

*John Ferguson [quieting him]* He'll not harm you, Clutie Sit down somewhere and control yourself! And don't be talking about killing anybody!

*Clutie John* But he's dead, Mr Ferguson!

*John Ferguson* Dead!

*Sarah Ferguson* Who's dead?

*Clutie John* Henry Witherow!

*John Ferguson* My God!

*Clutie John* He was found this morning in the farmyard shot through the heart

*John Ferguson* Shot!

*Clutie John* Ay, shot he was! The peelers is up at the farm now Sergeant Kernaghan and two constables is there

*Sarah Ferguson* Aw, it's not true, it's not true! The poor creature's demented and doesn't know what he's saying!

*Hannah Ferguson* Clutie, are you sure?

*Clutie John* Ay, Hannah, I am Certain sure! [*To MRS FERGUSON*] It is true It is indeed, and 'deed and doubles! I wouldn't tell you a lie for the world I saw his corpse myself, stretched out in the yard It was quare to think of him lying there, and me

could hit him if I liked and him couldn't hit back!

*James Caesar* But but who killed him?

[*JOHN FERGUSON turns to look at him, and JAMES CAESAR sees accusation in his eyes*]

I didn't do it, John! It wasn't me that killed him! I swear to God it wasn't me! I'll take my oath on the Bible!

*John Ferguson* Jimmy! . . .

*James Caesar* I tell you I didn't do it How do you know he's dead? You only have Clutie John's word for it, and you know rightly he's away in the mind!

*Hannah Ferguson* Oh, he's dead, thank God, he's dead!

*James Caesar [turning to her]* It's mebbe not true, Hannah

*Clutie John* It's as true as death, Hannah! I tell you I saw him myself, and the peelers were asking a wheen of questions

*James Caesar [in a panic]* Did they ask anything about me, Clutie? [*He does not wait for an answer, but, sitting down at the table, buries his face in his hands*] Oh, ny God, they'll be blaming me for it, and I never did it at all! [*He gets up and goes to JOHN FERGUSON, plucking his arm*] John, listen to me! You know the sort I am, don't you? You know rightly I couldn't have done it myself! I came here this morning and told you I was afeard to do it! Oh, my God, won't you believe me?

*Hannah Ferguson* Jimmy!

*James Caesar [miserably]* Ay, Hannah

*Hannah Ferguson* Don't deny it if you did it

*James Caesar* I wouldn't deny it! [*He goes to HANNAH*] Hannah, make your da believe me! Tell him you don't think I did it You don't, do you?

*Hannah Ferguson* You say you didn't, Jimmy!

*James Caesar* But you think I did do it! I know you do! I can see it in your eyes!

*Hannah Ferguson* I'd be proud if you had done it, Jimmy!

*James Caesar [miserably]* Every one'll think I did it, the peelers and every one! [*He subsides again at the table*]

*Clutie John* It's a fearful thing to take a man's life It is, in sang! There was many a song made up in Ireland about the like of a thing of that sort I wonder, now, could

I make up a song about Henry Witherow to be singing on the fair-days!

*Sarah Ferguson* Wheesht with you, Clutie!

*James Caesar* [*starting up and addressing Clutie John*] What sort of questions were the peelers asking, Clutie? Did they make any mention of me, did you hear?

*Clutie John* I couldn't hear a word they were saying, Mr Caesar, but whatever questions they were asking, they were putting the answers down in their wee books

*James Caesar* If they get to know I had a grudge against Witherow over the head of Hannah, they'll be after me They know rightly I never cared for him any time of my life but then I never done any harm to him for all my talk, and if they didn't know about Hannah, mebbe they'd never think of me [*Going to JOHN FERGUSON*] John, you'll never let on anything, will you? [*He turns, without waiting for an answer, and speaks to MRS FERGUSON and HANNAH*] You two won't either, will you? And Clutie John? I'm sorry, Clutie, for all I said to you I wasn't thinking, that's why I said it And if you'll not let on to the peelers about me, I'll give you something for yourself

*Clutie John* What'll you give me, Mr Caesar?

*James Caesar* I don't know yet I'll give you something I'll give you your dinner whenever you want it, and I'll let you sleep in my loft [*To JOHN FERGUSON*] John, make him promise not to clash on me! You have more influence over him nor any one Where's Andrew? We must make him promise, too! Call him in, Mrs Ferguson, and bid him promise he won't tell!

*John Ferguson* We can't make any promises, Jimmy

*James Caesar* You'll not promise! Oh, you'll never go and tell the peelers, will you, and have them suspecting me, and me didn't do it?

*John Ferguson* You must answer to the law, Jimmy

*James Caesar* But I didn't do it, I tell you! I'll take my oath I didn't! Where's the Bible? I'll swear on the Bible!

[*ANDREW FERGUSON enters*]

*Andrew Ferguson* What ails you all?

*John Ferguson* Henry Witherow's dead!

[*ANDREW pauses for a few moments be-*

*fore he replies When he speaks, his voice is very strained*]

*Andrew Ferguson* Oh!

*John Ferguson* He was found in his yaid this morning, shot!

*Andrew Ferguson* Shot!

*John Ferguson* Ay!

*Andrew Ferguson* That's quare!

*James Caesar* [*wildly*] Your da thinks it was me that shot him, Andrew, and so does your ma and Hannah, but I tell you I didn't You know me, Andrew, don't you? You guessed that I wouldn't have the courage to kill Witherow, didn't you?

*Andrew Ferguson* [*turning away from him*] Ay

*James Caesar* There, you hear what your son says, John Ferguson! You hear him, don't you? Andrew doesn't believe I did it I feel happier in my mind now Mebbe the peelers'll believe me when I tell them I didn't do it Sergeant Kernaghan knows me well Him and me was at the same school together

*Andrew Ferguson* You ought to try and get away, Jimmy

*James Caesar* Get away! . . . Do you not believe me either, Andrew? Do you think I killed him?

*Andrew Ferguson* No, I don't believe you did, but it's likely other people'll think it

*John Ferguson* Jimmy, why don't you ease your mind? There's no boundary to the love of God, and if you confess your sin, He'll forgive you for it

*James Caesar* Will I never satisfy you, John Will you never believe I didn't do it?

*John Ferguson* I wish I could believe you

*Andrew Ferguson* If you can prove where you were

*James Caesar* How can I prove it when no one seen me?

[*CLUTIE JOHN goes to the door and looks down the loame*]

*Clutie John* Here's the peelers coming!

*James Caesar* [*in terror*] Oh, my God!

*Clutie John* There's the sergeant and the constables and a crowd of people running after them!

*James Caesar* They're coming for me! I know rightly they are! They'll take me up John, for the love of God, help me to hide somewhere!

*John Ferguson* I can't, Jimmy, I can't If you've broke the law, the law must have its reckoning.

*Andrew Ferguson* Have you changed your mind, then, da! You were all for love and forgiveness awhile ago

*John Ferguson* Ay, son, I was, and I am still, but Jimmy must redeem himself. A man should submit to punishment of his own free will, not be dragged to it. I know I'm not thinking clear, but I'm certain that Jimmy should submit to the law, whether he killed Witherow or not. It'll tell again' him if he runs away.

*[The noise of the approaching crowd is heard]*

*James Caesar* I must hide, I must hide! I can't face them! *[He gazes wildly round the room]* Hannah, tell your da to let me hide!

*John Ferguson* There's no use in hiding, Jimmy. You can't hide from yourself, can you?

*James Caesar* Hide me, Hannah, and God'll reward you!

*Hannah Ferguson* *[appealingly]* Da!

*John Ferguson* I can't, daughter. He must submit himself to the will of God. There's no other way for a man to save himself.

*[The crowd comes to the door. SERGEANT KERNAGHAN and the two constables step inside the kitchen. The Sergeant advances while the constables keep back the murmuring crowd which surges round the door.]*

*Sergeant Kernaghan* I'm sorry to put you to any bother. *[He sees JAMES CAESAR]* Ah, James Caesar, I arrest you on the suspicion of murdering Henry Witherow, and I warn you that anything you say will be taken down in writing and used as evidence against you!

*James Caesar* *[shrinking]* I didn't do it! I tell you I didn't do it! Sergeant, for the love of God don't take me up! You and me attended the same school together.

*Sergeant Kernaghan* I'm heartsore at having to do it, Jimmy, but I can't help myself.

*[He beckons to the constables, who come forward and put handcuffs on CAESAR'S wrists. The crowd penetrates into the room, and the Sergeant goes and pushes it back.]*

*James Caesar* *[more calmly]* I meant to kill him. I admit that.

*[The crowd tosses this admission from lip to lip.]*

But I didn't do it. If I should never speak

again, that's the God's truth! I'm not sorry he's dead, but it wasn't me that killed him.

*Sergeant Kernaghan* Come along, now. *James Caesar* Good-bye to you all!

*John Ferguson* God give you peace, Jimmy!

*Hannah Ferguson* *[going to CAESAR and touching his arm]* Good-bye, Jimmy!

*James Caesar* I wish for your sake I had killed him, I'd be a happier man nor I am.

*Sergeant Kernaghan* I must ask you to come along now. *[To the constables]* Just clear the crowd away from the door!

*[The constables push the people away from the door, and then they and the Sergeant close about JIMMY CAESAR and take him away. The crowd surges round them and slowly disappears, murmuring loudly as it goes. HANNAH closes the door behind them and then goes and sits down on the sofa beside her mother, who is weeping. There is silence for a moment.]*

*John Ferguson* God knows His own ways best!

*[ANDREW stands staring in front of him. Then he goes to the door and opens it, and stands gazing down the lane after the retreating crowd. CLUTIE JOHN sits down on the seat in the fireplace and takes out his whistle. He begins to play "Willie Reilly and His Colleen Bawn".]*

*Andrew Ferguson* *[fiercely]* Quit that damned whistle, will you?

*[CLUTIE JOHN looks up at him questioningly, and then puts the whistle away. ANDREW stands still for a moment longer. Then he closes the door and walks towards the fire and holds his hands in front of the blaze.]*

*Andrew Ferguson* It's colder the day nor it was yesterday!

*John Ferguson* Ay, son!

#### ACT FOUR

It is the late afternoon of a day a fortnight later. JOHN FERGUSON, who has become feebler in the interval, but at the same time more deeply religious, is sitting in the attitude in which he was seen at the beginning of the play. His chair is drawn up to the fire, and he has his Bible open in his hands. He is reading the eighteenth chapter of the second book of Samuel. It is clear



*from his look of fragility that he is dying. Mrs FERGUSON is standing at the door, looking down the "loane."*

*John Ferguson [reading aloud]* "And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant, and me thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was And the king said unto him, Turn aside and stand there And he turned aside and stood still And, behold, Cush came, and Cush said, Tidings, my lord, the king for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee And the king said unto Cush, Is the young man Absalom safe? "

*Sarah Ferguson* Here's Hannah now, John! She's just turned the corner of the loane

*John Ferguson [looking up from the Bible]* Ay, wife, it'll be about her time

*Sarah Ferguson [entering the kitchen and setting a kettle on the fire]* I don't know how she can bear to go and see Jimmy the way she does when she minds everything If it hadn't been for her changing her mind, Witherow would be living now!

*John Ferguson [putting the Bible down on the table beside him, and turning to his wife]* You must never say the like of that to her, Sarah! The girl couldn't see in front of her No one could

*Sarah Ferguson* She would have nothing to do with him before he killed Witherow, and now she goes to see him whenever they'll let her in the jail! You would near think she was in love with him over the head of the crime, though I don't believe she is myself, for all she visits him. *[She sits down on the sofa and takes up some darning, on which she begins to work]* There's been a quare change in her this last fortnight! She's quieter on it, and not so headstrong and set on herself as she used to be Indeed, sometimes I near think she's in a decline

*John Ferguson [sighing as he speaks]* Ay, she's been through a mort of sorrow, that girl! She's young to be feeling the weight of the world already

*Sarah Ferguson* Ay, indeed! And there's Andrew hasn't a word to say to any one since it happened Sometimes I try to talk to him about Jimmy, but sure I might as well hold my tongue All I can get out of

him is "Ay, ma!" or "No," or mebbe he'll just nod his head *[She sighs]* Ah, dear, our children seem to be slipping away from us, John!

*John Ferguson* Mebbe they're going past us, Sarah It's natural, that! You and your children can't keep pace with each other all your life They must get ahead of you some time It hurts you when you feel them outstripping you, but it's the way God works, and sure He doesn't leave you without a consolation of some sort God never hits you with both hands at the one time, Sarah, and if we're losing our children, we're finding ourselves You and me's drawing closer to one another, woman! *[He holds out his hand to her]*

*Sarah Ferguson [taking his hand]* Ay, John, we are We were always good comrades since ever we were married, you and me, for all the trouble we've had

*John Ferguson* Ay, wife, ay!

*[He takes up the Bible again and reads it to himself As he does so, HANNAH enters the kitchen Her manner is more restrained than it was when the play began, and she seems to be older in manner Her actions appear to be independent of her thoughts]*

*Sarah Ferguson* You're back again, Hannah?

*Hannah Ferguson* Ay, ma! *[She takes off her outdoor garments and lays them aside]*

*John Ferguson* Well, Hannah, how is Jimmy the day?

*Hannah Ferguson* He seemed quieter in his mind, da

*John Ferguson* Has he confessed the truth yet?

*Hannah Ferguson* No I didn't like to mention it to him, and he didn't say anything to me But I know he hasn't confessed, because I went to Mulhern, the solicitor, afterwards, and he told me Jimmy still makes out that he didn't do it *[She comes and sits at the table]*

*John Ferguson* I wish he'd unburden his mind It's no good him keeping it up like that What does Mulhern say about it?

*Hannah Ferguson* He doesn't know what to think He says that when he's by himself, he feels sure Jimmy did it, but when he's with Jimmy, he begins to be doubtful

*John Ferguson* Doubtful

*Hannah Ferguson* Ay There's something about the way Jimmy denies it that near

makes you believe him All the same, Mulhern thinks he did it, and he says that if he was to confess, it would be better for him There are extenuating circumstances

*John Ferguson* Nothing can extenuate a murder, Hannah! God's Word is clear. "But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you Bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other, and him that taketh away thy cloak, forbid him not to take thy coat also" Them words is plain enough You can't twist them out of their meaning There can be no excuse, Hannah, for a bad deed there can only be repentance and forgiveness

*Hannah Ferguson* We all have our natures, da!

*John Ferguson* Ay, daughter, we have, but there's the one duty for the whole of us

*Hannah Ferguson* I met John Comber on the road, and he's set on getting up a petition for Jimmy He says the judge is sure to sentence him to death

*Sarah Ferguson* God save us!

*Hannah Ferguson* and so we'd better be prepared to do all that's needful

*Sarah Ferguson* Ah, sure, they'll never hang him when they know all the facts It wouldn't be honest or fair, and there's many says Witherow should have been shot long ago They'll mebbe give Jimmy penal servitude for life

*Hannah Ferguson* That's worse nor hanging They take your life, but they don't give you death

*Sarah Ferguson* [*sighing*] Ah, I daresay you're right! Dear knows, when you think of what they do to you, you'd wonder anybody ever killed a person at all

[*SAM MAWHINNEY, the postman, comes to the door*]

*Sam Mawhinney* I'm not empty-handed this time, Mrs Ferguson I've a letter for you the day

*Sarah Ferguson* A letter?

*Sam Mawhinney* Ay, from America The mail's in the day!

*Sarah Ferguson* [*going to him and taking the letter from him*] A letter from America!

*Sam Mawhinney* Ay! Don't you mind the last time the mail come in you were expecting a letter from America, and you

were quare and cut up because you didn't get it? I declare to my goodness it was the very day Witherow was shot A fortnight the day! I never thought of that now!

*Sarah Ferguson* [*absently*] Thank you, Sam!

*Sam Mawhinney* Ah, not at all I only hope it's good news for you Are you keeping your health, Mr Ferguson?

*John Ferguson* I'm bravely, thank you, Sam!

*Sam Mawhinney* That's right Good-evening to you, Hannah! Well, I must be going Good-night to you all!

*Sarah Ferguson* Good-night to you, Sam!

[*SAM MAWHINNEY goes off*]

*Sarah Ferguson* [*standing in the centre of the kitchen gazing vacantly at the letter*] It's from Andrew, John! Will I open it?

*John Ferguson* Ay!

[*She opens the envelope and takes out the letter and an order for money which are inside*]

*Sarah Ferguson* Oh, he's sent the money to pay the mortgage!

[*She holds the order in her fingers and gazes stupidly at it for a few moments They are all silent for a while*]

*Hannah Ferguson* [*bitterly*] God's late, da!

*John Ferguson* [*feeling the blow to his faith*] Don't, daughter, don't

*Hannah Ferguson* [*getting up and going to the window*] Oh, it's wicked, it's wicked!

*Sarah Ferguson* If it had only come by the last mail!

*John Ferguson* There must be some meaning in it There must be! God doesn't make mistakes

*Sarah Ferguson* Will I read the letter to you, John?

*John Ferguson* Ay! Ay, do!

*Sarah Ferguson* [*sitting down at the table*] There's not much in it [*She peers at the letter*] I can't understand his writing without my specs!

*Hannah Ferguson* [*coming to her and taking the letter from her*] I'll read it, ma! [*She, too, sits down at the table, and she reads the letter aloud*] "Dear Brother, I received your letter safe, and am sorry to hear about your trouble, but am glad to see that you are better in yourself and that Sarah and Andrew and Hannah are keeping their health as I am, too, thank God It is a great deal of money to send, and I have



had a lot of bother to raise it, but I could not let the farm go out of the family without making an effort, so I send the money to you with this letter. If I am well-spared, I will mebbe come home and see you all. I am getting tired of America. It is no place for an old man that wasn't born here. Remember me to all my friends and acquaintances, and with my best love and respect to all at home, I am, your affectionate brother, Andrew. P.S.—Write soon." [She turns the letter over] There's a piece on the other side. "P.S.—I am sorry I missed the mail yesterday. I made a mistake in the day, but I daresay this will reach you in time—Andrew."

[She puts the letter down. They sit in silence. Then HANNAH begins to laugh hysterically.]

Hannah Ferguson. Isn't it quare and funny, da? Isn't it funny?

Sarah Ferguson [going to her and shaking her]. Hannah, Hannah, for dear sake, control yourself!

Hannah Ferguson [lapsing from laughter to tears]. Where's the right in it, da? Where's the right in it? It's not just! It's not fair!

Sarah Ferguson. Ah, quit, Hannah!

Hannah Ferguson. There would have been none of this if he hadn't forgotten the right day, none of it. Oh, da, da!

[ANDREW FERGUSON enters.]

Andrew Ferguson. Is anything the matter?

Hannah Ferguson. No, no, Andrew! Nothing's the matter! Nothing! Your uncle Andrew forgot the mail-day, that's all!

Andrew Ferguson [to his father]. What's up, da?

John Ferguson [feebly]. It's. . . it's your uncle. [He becomes incoherent.]

Sarah Ferguson. Your uncle Andrew's sent the money to pay the mortgage, son. He forgot the mail-day, and just missed it. If he hadn't forgot, the money would have been here before. . . before Jimmy killed Witherow!

Hannah Ferguson. Ay! Ay! Before—before Jimmy killed Witherow! And then my da says it was all planned!

Andrew Ferguson [with a queer wrinkled smile on his face, as he takes up the letter and fingers it]. Huh! Uncle Andrew never had a good memory, had he?

[No one speaks.]

Well, the farm's safe, anyway.

Hannah Ferguson. Ay, the farm's safe!

John Ferguson. We can't understand everything. It's no good trying to puzzle it all out. We must just have faith that's all! Just have faith!

Hannah Ferguson. One man's dead and another's in jail in danger of his life because my uncle Andrew forgot the mail-day.

Andrew Ferguson. It's. . . it's a quare set-out!

John Ferguson. Ay! [Sighing heavily] Ay!

Andrew Ferguson [hysterically]. Ha! Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!

John Ferguson. Andrew, Andrew, son, don't you give way, too! Set an example to your sister of self-control!

Andrew Ferguson [recovering himself]. Ay! Ay, da, I will [He sits down].

Sarah Ferguson. Hannah's just come back from seeing Jimmy, Andrew!

Andrew Ferguson. Oh! Oh! Oh, yes, I remember, she was going to see him the day, wasn't she? [His voice is very hard and strained] What was he like, Hannah?

[HANNAH does not answer.]

Sarah Ferguson. She says he was quieter in his mind.

Andrew Ferguson. That's good. It's good to be quiet in your mind! It's well for him.

John Ferguson. It's not well for him, Andrew. He still denies that he killed Witherow.

Andrew Ferguson. Mebbe he didn't kill him, da!

John Ferguson. I would like to believe that, but I can't.

Andrew Ferguson. He ought to have killed him [More emphatically] He ought to have killed him. . . but he didn't.

John Ferguson. Ah, son, what's the good of talking that way? You and Hannah's overstrung, and you hardly know what you're saying or doing, the pair of you. I've noticed how quiet you've been lately, and I believe you've been brooding over Jimmy till now you can't think clearly about him.

Andrew Ferguson. He didn't kill Witherow, da. He hadn't the pluck to kill him. It was me that done it!

Sarah Ferguson [starting up]. You!

John Ferguson [quietly]. Sit down, Sarah! The lad's beside himself.

[MRS. FERGUSON resumes her seat.]

Andrew, you must not give way to your fancies like that! *[He rises and faces him]* Come to bed, son, and rest yourself. You look tired and exhausted *[He takes hold of ANDREW'S arm and tries to lead him to the stairs]*

Andrew Ferguson *[eluding his father's grasp]* No, da, I'm not away in the mind, as you think I know rightly what I'm saying. It was me that killed Witherow! *[Now that he has confessed his deed, his voice becomes quite calm]*

John Ferguson You're demented, son!

Andrew Ferguson No, da, I'm not. I killed him. With that gun there *[He points to the gun over the mantel-shelf]*

Sarah Ferguson *[in terrible alarm]* Son-a-dear, do you know what you're saying?

Andrew Ferguson I know rightly, ma

Sarah Ferguson It's not true, it's not true

*[JOHN FERGUSON has been standing gaping at his son as if he cannot understand what he is saying. Then, as comprehension comes to him, he goes to ANDREW and grips him by the shoulder]*

John Ferguson *[almost harshly]* Andrew!

Andrew Ferguson *[quietly]* Ay, da!

John Ferguson Do you mean . . . do you mean you killed Witherow?

Andrew Ferguson I do, da!

John Ferguson *[releasing his grip and staggering back a little]* Oh, my God, my God!

Sarah Ferguson It's not true, John, it's not true. The poor lad's mind is turned with trouble.

Andrew Ferguson It is true. I knew that Jimmy wouldn't kill him, so I made up my mind I'd kill him myself.

John Ferguson *[wildly]* Quit, quit, quit! I must think. I must think! *[He goes back to his chair and sinks into it. As he does so, his hand touches his Bible. He pushes it away from him.]*

Hannah Ferguson *[going to her brother and putting her arms about him]* Andrew, dear!

Andrew Ferguson I'm not sorry I killed him, Hannah!

Hannah Ferguson No, Andrew, I know you're not.

Andrew Ferguson But I'm ashamed to think I let Jimmy bear the blame for it. That's as bad as him hiding under the

whin-bush when he should have been killing Witherow himself. It's been on my mind ever since the peelers took him up. That's the only thing that disturbs me. I lie awake at night, and I say to myself, "You took Jimmy's place of your own free will, but you made him take your place against his will!" Mind you, I felt no more remorse when I killed Witherow nor a terrier feels when it kills a rat.

Hannah Ferguson No, Andrew, why would you?

Andrew Ferguson I went up to his farm, and when I got there the dog begun to bark, and Witherow come to the door. "Is that you, Jimmy Caesar?" he shouted. "Have you come to kill me?" He let a big coarse laugh out of him when he said that, and I could feel my heart jumping mad inside me. "It's not Jimmy Caesar!" I shouted back at him, "it's me!" I could see him straining to look at me, and his features was puzzled. Then I put my gun up to my shoulder, and I took aim at him. "Away home out of that!" he shouted. And then I pulled the trigger, and he let a yell out of him and fell in a lump on the ground. The dog was barking and straining at its chain.

Hannah Ferguson Poor beast!

Andrew Ferguson But I didn't mind that. I shouted at it to lie down, and then I come straight home. I mind when I was half-way home, I said to myself, "Mebbe you've not killed him," and I was near turning back to make sure. But I just didn't.

There was no one in the kitchen when I come in, and I put the gun back where I found it, and no one knew except me. It never entered no one's mind that it was me killed him. I was safe enough, and at first I didn't care whether Jimmy got hung or not. I said to myself it would serve him right if he was hung for being a colhe. And then I tried to comfort myself by saying he wouldn't be hung at all when the people knew the way he'd been provoked. But it wasn't any good. I got more and more ashamed, and I couldn't sit still in the house with you all, and my da saying Jimmy ought to confess. I couldn't rest nowhere. The only consolation I had was to go into the fields and listen to Clutie playing his whistle. He knew it was me done it, for all he didn't say anything.

*[JOHN FERGUSON rouses himself from*

*the lethargy into which he sank when he heard his son's confession He gets up from his chair and takes hold of ANDREW as if he were protecting him from some danger]*

*John Ferguson* We must hide him somewhere That's what we must do We'll send you to America, Andrew, to live with your uncle Ay, ay! That's what the money was for! You may be certain sure that was what it come for! You'll be safe when you're out of the country, son! No one'll harm you in America! [*To his wife*] Star yourself Sarah, woman, star yourself! We've no time to lose The peelers might hear it and come any minute [*To ANDREW*] Come on, son, and get ready! You must quit the place the night .

*Andrew Ferguson* No, da .

*John Ferguson* Ay, son, you must! You can go up to Belfast by the next train, and we'll send the money to you there You'd better change your name, son! [*He puts his hands to his head as if he were dazed*] I'm all moidhered! Sarah, Sarah, woman!

*Sarah Ferguson, Ay, John?*

*John Ferguson* We must hide him the night Do you understand me? Mebbe some one heard him telling us about it You never know who's listening, and the world's full of clash-bags!

*Andrew Ferguson* I can't go, da, and leave Jimmy in the wrong

*John Ferguson* Yes, yes, son! That'll be all right! We'll think about Jimmy afterwards Come and get ready now, son!

[*He tries to lead ANDREW to the staircase, but ANDREW resists him*]

*Sarah Ferguson* Go with your da, son, and get ready!

*Andrew Ferguson* [*freeing himself from them and sitting down again*] I must do right by Jimmy for my peace' sake

*John Ferguson* No, son, you must save yourself first

*Andrew Ferguson.* You're asking me to do what you wouldn't let Jimmy do for all he begged you!

*John Ferguson* [*fiercely*] You're my son, Andrew, and Jimmy's not! He always meant to kill Witherow Many's a time you all heard him say he would do it! Didn't you? You mocked him yourselves over the head of it He killed the man many's a while in his mind, and the Bible says if you

think a sin, you commit a sin [*He takes hold of ANDREW again*] Come away, son! Hannah, persuade him .

*Hannah Ferguson* I can't, da Andrew knows what's best for himself

*Sarah Ferguson* Do you want your brother hanged, Hannah? Is that what you want?

*Hannah Ferguson* What peace will Andrew have if Jimmy suffers for him?

*Andrew Ferguson* That's what I say to myself many's a time, Hannah! You see that yourself, da, don't you?

*John Ferguson* [*feebly going to his chair*] I've suffered enough! I've suffered enough, Andrew! It's not just or right to put more trouble on me now I've lost my health . . and then there was the mortgage, and . . Hannah . . . and Jimmy . . and now!

Oh, I've bore enough, and it's not fair to ask me to bear any more

*Hannah Ferguson* We all have to make our own peace, da We can't have it made for us You used always to say that

*Andrew Ferguson* Hannah's right, da There'll be no content for me till I content myself [*He rises*] I'll go down now to the barracks and tell the sergeant

*John Ferguson* [*turning to him and speaking brokenly*] Son, son! .

*Sarah Ferguson* I'll not have him made suffer! [*Going to ANDREW and holding him tightly*] I'll not let you go, Andrew, I'll not let you go!

*Andrew Ferguson* I must go, ma, for my peace' sake Every minute that Jimmy's locked in jail is a burden on my mind I've mocked the man times and times for a coward, though he couldn't help his nature, but I'm worse nor him a hundred times

*Sarah Ferguson* Be wheesht with you, son, be wheesht!

*Andrew Ferguson* Eating the heart out of me, it is Gnawing and gnawing! . I never get the picture of Jimmy out of my mind! I run for miles this morning to try and tire myself out so's I could sleep and rest myself, but I can't get content nohow That's the way of it, ma You understand me, da, don't you?

*John Ferguson, Ay, son, I understand you*

*Sarah Ferguson* You can go to America, Andrew, the way your da said you could, and when you're safe, you can send home

a confession to save Jimmy That would do, wouldn't it?

*John Ferguson [eagerly clutching at the straw]* Ay, ay, that would do, Andrew

*Sarah Ferguson* Or we could go ourselves and tell the peelers when you were safely out of it

*Hannah Ferguson* They might think it was a made-up thing

*Sarah Ferguson [lounding on her]* Quit, you! It doesn't become you, Hannah, to be telling your brother what to do when it's your fault he's in the trouble he is

*Hannah Ferguson* Ma, ma, don't say it

*Sarah Ferguson* Ay, you can cry well enough, but that'll not save you from the blame If you'd taken Jimmy at the start

*John Ferguson* Sarah, woman, don't don't talk to her that way!

*Sarah Ferguson* I will talk to her It was her that killed Witherow, and no one else It's her that ought to be hanged

*Andrew Ferguson [standing up and shouting at his mother]* Ma!

*Sarah Ferguson [collapsing]* Am I to see my own son sent to the gallows? Am I to sit still and let you hang him between you? John, are you going to let Hannah drive Andrew to the jail?

*Andrew Ferguson* She's not driving me, ma No one could

*Sarah Ferguson [ignoring her son]* John, will you be content to let her

*John Ferguson [patiently]* I'm trying to discover God's will, Sarah

*Sarah Ferguson [passionately]* I don't want God's will! I want my son! It's nothing to me what he done—he's my son! I don't care if he killed a hundred men—he's my son! I'll not let him go to the jail I'll take him away myself to some place where he'll be safe [*She goes over to ANDREW*] Get ready, Andrew, and we'll go away together the night Your da wanted you to go a minute since [*She tries to draw him away from his seat*] Come with me, son, and don't be heeding Hannah

*Andrew Ferguson [resisting her]* Don't, ma [*He turns to his father*] Da!

*John Ferguson* I can't advise you, son Don't ask me I was weak a minute ago I forgot God's will Mebbe you're right, son but don't ask me to advise you

I'm getting old, and I haven't the strength of mind I had one time

*Sarah Ferguson* You'll never let him go and give himself up, will you? Oh, have you no nature at all, none of you? I thought you took pride in him, John!

*John Ferguson* I did take pride in him, but I take no pride in anything now I must have sinned bitterly against God to be punished this way It must have been something I done that's brought calamity on us I'd be willing to pay whatever price was demanded of me but Andrew!

*Andrew Ferguson* Da, a man must clean himself, mustn't he?

*John Ferguson* Ay Ay, son!

*Andrew Ferguson* It's no good other people doing things for him He must do them himself

*John Ferguson* Yes, yes

*Andrew Ferguson* And it's no good any one doing anything for me I must do it myself, da Jimmy can't pay for me He can only pay for himself

*Sarah Ferguson* I won't let you go, son!

*Andrew Ferguson* If they were to hang Jimmy, ma, or to keep him in jail for the rest of his life, do you think would I be happy?

*Sarah Ferguson* Ah, but you could forget, son, in a new place We'd go where no one knew anything about us and begin all over again

*Andrew Ferguson* We'd know, ma Oh, don't you mind what my da said to Jimmy "You can't hide from yourself"? There's nothing truer nor that

*Sarah Ferguson [beating her breast]* Oh, will no one help me to keep my son safe? Will you all take him from me? [*ANDREW goes to her and kisses her hair*]

*Andrew Ferguson* It's best this way, ma You'll see that yourself some day

[*MRS FERGUSON clutches him to her*]

*Sarah Ferguson* Don't leave me, son

*Andrew Ferguson* I must, ma, for my peace' sake!

[*He kisses her and then releases himself from her embrace She buries her face on the table and sobs without restraint*]

Will you come to the barracks with me, da?

[*JOHN FERGUSON looks up piteously at his son His will fails him, and he puts out his hands in supplication to AN-*

DREW, and then, recovering himself, draws them in again]

John Ferguson Don't ask me, son, I couldn't bear it

Andrew Ferguson It'll be lonely going there by myself Will you come, Hannah?

Hannah Ferguson [quietly] Ay, Andrew

Andrew Ferguson Thank you, Hannah

[He puts on his coat and cap HANNAH picks up the garments which she threw aside when she first came into the kitchen, and puts them on There is silence, save for MRS FERGUSON'S sobs, while they do so]

Andrew Ferguson Good-night, da!

John Ferguson [without looking up] Good-night, Andrew!

[ANDREW bends down to kiss his father, who draws him close to him]

John Ferguson [brokenly] My son, my son!

Andrew Ferguson [chokingly] Da! [He releases himself and goes to his mother]

Andrew Ferguson Good-night, ma!

Sarah Ferguson [starting up and clinging to him] No, no, Andrew, no!

Andrew Ferguson [firmly] Good-night, ma! [He kisses her, and then gently releases himself from her clasp and puts her back into her chair]

Andrew Ferguson [to his father] I think John Luke'll be able to take care of the farm for a day or two, but I wouldn't trust him longer, da He's bone idle, that man, and you'd better get some one else as soon as you can If you were to get some one that understood management, he would do rightly as a labourer if he was watched well Arthur Cairnduff heard of a suitable person a while ago that might do

John Ferguson Ay, son, ay

Andrew Ferguson And Kerr, the butcher, 'll give you a good price for the bullock [To HANNAH] Are you ready, Hannah?

Hannah Ferguson Ay, Andrew!

Andrew Ferguson [vaguely] Well, I'll bid you all good-night

John Ferguson Good-night, son

Andrew Ferguson I'll I'll mebbe see you again some day!

[He pauses for a moment, but his father does not reply HANNAH opens the door, and ANDREW goes out]

Andrew Ferguson [in the doorway]. The air's turned cold

Hannah Ferguson [to her father] I'll be back as soon as I can, da!

[She goes out, closing the door behind her The sound rouses MRS FERGUSON, who sits up and gazes dazedly about her]

Sarah Ferguson Where are they? They're not gone?

John Ferguson Ay, they've gone Sit down, wife

Sarah Ferguson Oh, why did you let them go? I can't let him go, John, I can't let him go!

John Ferguson You must, Sarah God has some purpose with us, and there's no use in holding out against God, for He knows, and we don't

Sarah Ferguson I won't let him go! [She goes to the door and opens it] I'll bring him back!

[She goes out, shouting "Andrew! Andrew!" and leaves the door open JOHN FERGUSON sits brooding before the fire for a few moments Then he gets up, moving feebly, and goes across the room and shuts the door When he has done so, he stands for a moment or two gazing helplessly about the room Then he goes back to his seat As he sits down, his hand comes in contact with the open Bible Almost mechanically he picks it up and begins to read where he left off when the Act began His lips move as he reads to himself Then he slowly reads aloud]

John Ferguson "And the king said unto Cush, Is the young man Absalom safe?"

[The door opens, and MRS FERGUSON, weeping, enters]

Sarah Ferguson They've gone! They wouldn't come back! It's not right to be sending him away like that! He's my only son, and I'm an old woman You had no call to be sending him away

John Ferguson Isn't he the only son I have, too? Is it any easier for a father to give up his son nor it is for a mother? Has a man no pride in his child, and no grief when it dies or does wrong? Is it women only that can feel hurt? Woman, woman, your sorrow is no more nor mine, and mine is no more nor yours We're just stricker together Come here, Sarah! [She comes to

*him*] Sit down, woman, here by the side of me, and give me a hold of your hand [*She sits down on the stool beside him*] We've been married a long while, Sarah, and shared our good fortune and our bad We've had our pride and our humiliation God's been good to us, and He's been bitter hard But whatever it was, we've bore it together, haven't we?

*Sarah Ferguson*, Ay, John

*John Ferguson* And we'll bear this together too, woman, won't we?

*Sarah Ferguson* It's a hard thing for any one to bear Your own son to be taken from you

*John Ferguson* Ay, wife, it is, but we must just bear it, for God knows better nor we do what's right to be done [*He takes up the Bible again*] Listen to God's

Word, Sarah, and that'll strengthen you [*He continues his reading*] "And the king said unto Cush, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cush answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept and as he went [*his voice beginning to break*] thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son my son "

[*His voice ends in a sob The Bible falls from his hands on to his lap He sits staring into the fire There is a low moan from his wife*]

THE END



THE CORAL

(DIE KORALLE)

By GEORG KAISER

*Translated from the German by WINIFRED KATZIN*



*The three following plays—"The Coral," "Gas I," and "Gas II"—constitute a trilogy insofar as each presents a stage in the development of the main idea that runs through all. In its action, however, each play forms a complete and independent unit*

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*The translations of "The Coral" and "Gas II" were made especially for this collection*

## GEORG KAISER AND "EXPRESSIONISM"

GEORG KAISER, the author of *The Coral*, *Gas I*, and *Gas II*, was born in Magdeburg in 1878, the son of a merchant. After some years spent in business, he turned to the theatre. He wrote his first play, *Rector Kleist*, when he was twenty-five years old, and since that time devoted himself entirely to playwriting. Before his death in 1945 he wrote about forty plays, among the most important of which are the trilogy included in this volume, and *From Morn to Midnight* (*Von Morgen bis Mitternachts*), *Hell, Way, Earth* (*Holle, Weg, Erde*), and *The Fire in the Opera House* (*Der Brand im Opernhaus*). Although a strikingly original playwright, he has evidently been strongly influenced by Strindberg, Wedekind, Sternheim, and even by Shaw. As the Russian dramatist Andreyev confessed that he worked under "the sign of Schopenhauer," so Kaiser "names Schopenhauer, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Holderlin, and Plato as his spiritual fathers." Since Kaiser is in general an expressionist, and *The Coral*, *Gas I*, and *Gas II* are expressionistic, a description of the materials and methods of expressionism may at the same time both characterize the dramatist and throw light upon these particular plays.

Expressionism is difficult to define or even describe, since it employs so wide a variety of both subject-matter and treatment and is so inconsistent in its practices. Commonly supposed to have originated in Germany within the past decade or two, it really was consciously employed by Strindberg, and some of its phases have appeared sporadically in the work of various dramatists for generations past. As a dominant method, however, it has arisen largely since the World War and has flourished principally in Germany, where it has been practiced with more or less success by such dramatists as Kaiser, Hasenclever, Kokoscha, and Toller, of whom Kaiser is the chief.

Expressionism, as now practiced, has its roots in the unsettled conditions following World War I. It represents no organized movement and thus far has crystallized into no definite creed. But certain of its general characteristics are plain enough. It starts by taking its raw material from real life (no matter how far it may afterwards transcend this limit), but it aims to distill the very essence of reality and to present it in terms of the universal. Naturally, then, it is chiefly concerned not with phenomena but with ideas and the springs of conduct. Since it pursues its idea or its passions from the real world into the transcendental, it may place its action on more than one plane of consciousness,—reality passing into dream, finite into infinite, consciousness into subconsciousness, as may be demanded by the varying phases of its dominant idea or the successive moods of its characters. Hence it may start with something resembling realism and finally pass into the wildest phantasmagoria, even within the limits of a single action. The background of the action is usually symbolic of the states of mind of the characters (and this forms the basis of expressionism in scenic design), and often the entire action itself is only one elaborate symbol. Significantly, the action is usually presented in brief scenes, which are connected only by the fact that all present successive emotional reactions or various phases of the idea. The characters are mere types, and usually bear only type names, such as The Man, The Woman, The Doctor, The Policeman, The Billionaire. Each is dominated by some one idea or passion, to such an extent that he seems, in an extreme case, scarcely even a type, hardly more than a personified abstraction. The speech is often in staccato style, sometimes hurried and broken, and is often less significant than the action.

In general, expressionism seems an attempt, not always successful, to penetrate to the inner and universal reality. The expressionist is in his technique reckless, daring, unconventional—and utterly inconsistent in his practice. Whether or not expressionism is a passing phase, it is undoubtedly significant of the times and it has enlarged the resources of dramaturgy. Its influence has been felt in America, notably in the work of Eugene O'Neill.

*The Coral* was first produced in 1917, *Gas*, part I, in 1918, and *Gas*, part II, in 1920, all at the Neues Theater, in Frankfurt, Germany. *Gas*, part I, was produced in English, by the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, at Birmingham, England, in 1923, and at the Goodman Memorial Theatre, Chicago, in 1926.

## CHARACTERS

THE BILLIONAIRE  
THE SON  
THE DAUGHTER  
THE SECRETARY  
THE YOUNG WOMAN IN TAFFETA  
THE MAN IN BLUE  
THE LADY IN BLACK  
THE DAUGHTER OF THE LADY IN BLACK  
THE GENTLEMAN IN GRAY  
FIRST SERVANT  
SECOND SERVANT  
THE SINGER  
THE DOCTOR  
THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR  
THE CAPTAIN  
FIRST JUDGE  
SECOND JUDGE  
A GUARD  
A PRIEST

*The action takes place at the present day in an industrialized country  
not definitely located*

# THE CORAL

## ACT ONE

*An oval room, "The warm heart of the earth" Pale wall-panels in which the doors are invisible, two rear, one left Only two round armchairs of white elephant-leather, centre, opposite and far apart On the outer wing of the chair, right a signal apparatus*

*In this chair sits the SECRETARY An indefinable shy energy in the profile Reddish stubble of hair in narrow streaks from head to chin The frame, in its suit of the roughest material, small, yet derives weight and importance from a certain ever-ready initiative, with effort suppressed In the other chair the YOUNG WOMAN IN TAFFETA.*

*Secretary* Would you mind .

*The Young Woman in Taffeta* Oh, I understand you—will I be brief I am not the only one waiting to be heard The ante-room is crowded with others—and perhaps their cases are better justified Who can tell? The wretched are in all the earth's corners Whether the corner my fate thought fit to set me down in is an extra windy one

*Secretary* I should have to know what your fate has been before I could judge of that

*Young Woman in Taffeta* Hell, sir Yes, hell I do not exaggerate, that is not my way Or might I describe it better by one is human, sir, one has a mother believes in God yes, one is still capable of that, in spite of everything And I can't speak the words out loud, but I buy my bread with my body

*Secretary* Do you wish to be admitted into a home?

*Young Woman in Taffeta* With flowers shining on the window ledges!

*Secretary* [Takes a notebook out of his pocket and writes] You have two years' time in which to consider the foundations of a new life

*Young Woman in Taffeta* Two

*Secretary* The doors of every home for women who have strayed stand open to you today

*Young Woman in Taffeta* [Taking his hand

*and kissing it—hysterically]* I never sold my childhood faith I never held God up for sale Now he seeks me out with his messenger my God's messenger you are he Take my burning thanks, I offer it on my knees More than that more than that, it is God himself who goes amongst us again We are all saved . . . hallelujah, amen!

*[The SECRETARY presses a button on the signal board Immediately two servants enter left, herculean figures in yellow livery They raise the YOUNG WOMAN IN TAFFETA and lead her through the door, rear]*

*Young Woman in Taffeta* [Ecstatically] A home for the fallen—I shall become another woman there another

*[She and the servants go The servants admit the MAN IN BLUE and lead him to the chair, then go]*

*Secretary* Would you mind .

*Man in Blue* [Speaking with difficulty] My chest

*Secretary* Do you wish to be admitted to a sanatorium?

*Man in Blue* [Burying his face in his hands] They've turned me out now that I have worked my strength away for them Am I an old man? No I'm in the prime of life, but I look aged, aged My clothes flap on my bones—once I filled them out to the very seams The System has been the ruin of me

*Secretary* Are you a laborer?

*Man in Blue* The System ruins everyone with its inhuman using up of all a man's capacity And always a crowd waiting, so that one's got to be used up quick to make room for the next one

*Secretary* Can you find no employment in any factory?

*Man in Blue* They don't even let me through the gates any more I've been walking the streets for a fortnight now, and I have eaten my last penny away Now

*Secretary* We have settlements on the land

*Man in Blue* We have—I know They are far off and I can't get there on foot

*Secretary* They lie on the train line

*Man in Blue* I . . . haven't the price of a ticket

*Secretary* [Pulls out his notebook and writes Hands the slip of paper across] Show this note outside

*Man in Blue* [Reads—stands up] That is more than the train fare [Stammering] I have a wife and children I can take them with me—and I had meant to leave them!

[The SECRETARY presses a button on the signal-board The two servants come]

*Man in Blue* [Already hastening out, left] My wife . . . my children! [Goes]

[The servants shut the door behind him, then open it again and admit the LADY IN BLACK and her daughter The DAUGHTER carries a violin case]

*Lady in Black* [To the servants] Thank you—I prefer to stand [Servants go]

*Secretary* [Standing up] Would you mind . . .

*Lady in Black* [Calmly] I decided to take this step for my daughter's sake I lost my husband a few months ago He left me almost nothing For myself I have been able to find a situation which will keep me, but I know that I should never earn enough for my daughter's musical training I have reason to believe that her talent is great enough to ensure her future I purposely brought no testimonials to that effect The best witness to her capability is her playing Will you hear her?

*Secretary* I believe your daughter also will find that more enjoyable when her training is completed

*Lady in Black* Am I to assume from that, that . . . [The SECRETARY writes To her daughter] Kiss his hand

*Secretary* [Gives the sheet to the LADY IN BLACK] Collect this monthly until the end of her studies

*Lady in Black* [Without reading it] Thanks must weary you, you hear them so often People must seem pitiable to you, you make so many of them happy As for us, we can but marvel at the miracle that there can exist someone who does not shut himself away from us when we come to him with our troubles To hear us all is an act of greater courage than the fulfillment of our requests is an act of unspeakable goodness

[The SECRETARY presses a button on the signal-board The servants come and lead the LADY IN BLACK and her

daughter away A signal buzzes Immediately the SECRETARY presses another button One of the servants appears, left]

*Secretary* Wait [Servant goes]

[Through the righthand door in the rear which, as it opens, is seen to be heavily padded, the BILLIONAIRE hastens in The detailed description of the SECRETARY above aimed at the description of the BILLIONAIRE, for the SECRETARY is merely his double, identical to a hair Even in speech and gesture the likeness is complete]

*Billionaire* The sailing-list of the 'Freedom of the Seas' Received after departure yesterday and reported this morning by radio My son does not appear among the passengers

*Secretary* Only his companion

*Billionaire* The list is incomplete

*Secretary* They are usually perfectly accurate

*Billionaire* Where is my son if his companion is on that steamer? He must have booked on her It was my wish The papers published the names of every first-class passenger, and my son's was the first

*Secretary* I don't believe there is any error

*Billionaire* He must be on board There is no other ship he could possibly be on I sent express instructions to his companion that they were to come on her, she is the fastest of all steamers The report is wrong Get in touch with the shipping-office Ask the source of the error Whether on board—or in the drawing-up of the list [SECRETARY hesitates] Wait at the telephone for an answer

*Secretary* It will keep me . . .

*Billionaire* From what?

*Secretary* Today is open Thursday

*Billionaire* [Thoughtfully] Open Thursday [The SECRETARY waits] Go and inquire I'll stay here meanwhile [SECRETARY gives him the notebook] Say the matter is exceedingly urgent and report at once [SECRETARY leaves through door left BILLIONAIRE sits down in chair, presses button Servants admit the GENTLEMAN IN GRAY, powerful frame, in ample light-gray suit, the pockets stuffed with newspapers and pamphlets, round red head, shorn Sandals]

*Gentleman in Gray* [Following the servants, who indicate the chair—fanning himself with his cap]. Take it slow Wait a minute

Breathe deep [*Servants wait*] Better keep 'em calm out there—this is going to take some time [*To the BILLIONAIRE*] It won't be denied either I shall have your attention riveted with the first three words [*To the servants*] I'm no wild beast [*At a sign from the BILLIONAIRE, servants off*]

*Billionaire* Would you

*Gentleman in Gray* [*Looking about him*] So this is the room all the hymns are about—fountain of great compassion—holy of holies whence love and assistance flow [*With descriptive gestures*] Sweeping circle—significant form—glowing heart of the earth

*Billionaire* Say what you have to say

*Gentleman in Gray* Impressive bareness—two chairs—lots of room for plants and lamentations Extraordinary the paneling hasn't turned dark yet under the cries of distress dashing against it [*BILLIONAIRE moves his hand towards the signal-board GENTLEMAN notices the movement*] Don't ring for the servants I know this open Thursday is precious for all who wait Each wasted moment and some human fate is determined

*Billionaire* In what connection do you seek my help?

*Gentleman in Gray* I [*leaning forward*] want to help you [*BILLIONAIRE makes another involuntary movement towards the wall*] No need I'm sane, quite I thought this over a long time I've studied the material—worked over it—and come to the result—and the solution is of absurd simplicity The whole struggle—this gigantic fight which is waged at present with enormous disposal of means and counter-means—collapses, flows away, is gone

*Billionaire* What struggle do you mean?

*Gentleman in Gray* The only one which rages eternally—between poor and rich

*Billionaire* That

*Gentleman in Gray* I can settle

*Billionaire* [*With a searching look that flashes interest*] What made you come to me?

*Gentleman in Gray* You're surprised But I had to hold your attention in the first moment or all was lost The servants wouldn't have let me through a second time No trifling with those two [*Bringing out his papers with violence*] I now proceed to develop what I briefly mentioned before This is material—exhaustive assurances Socialist newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, the entire arsenal of the fighting proletariat Appeals, estimates

of means for stirring up success—tariffs, statistics, tables of figures, flood of literature Literature—nothing else And brings nobody a single step further, the rift gapes wider every day For it is built upon enmity to the knife [*Pushing it all back into his pockets*] Pity for their pains Useless wandering in blind alleys To no purpose Do you follow me?

*Billionaire* I don't understand

*Gentleman in Gray* What are you doing here? Giving with both hands Whoever asks, gets Much or little, whatever they want Your billions make it possible You declare your open Thursday All come and receive Wretchedness creeps over this threshold cowering, and dances out joy The mouths of the oppressed hail paradise in this oval room—here beats the heart of the earth—glowing, merciful Not for a moment does it miss a beat—but spends and spends Why do you do it?

*Billionaire* My millions . . .

*Gentleman in Gray* No

*Billionaire* What then?

*Gentleman in Gray* Your wealth revolts you [*BILLIONAIRE raises one hand*] You're not aware of it yourself, but for me there can be no other reason I do assure you I didn't come upon it overnight I've run around too in all the wearisome blind-alleys until I found the open road that alone leads to the goal.

*Billionaire* What goal?

*Gentleman in Gray* The end of the fight, the struggle between rich and poor A thing that no party, no parole, can bring to pass, that you can make real with a single stroke of your pen And thereby render all the rest superfluous,—this glowing heart of the earth of yours, your open Thursday, the assemblage of misery in your anteroom For they are all mere drops you pour into the sea of distress Take it from me,—I know But by the pen-stroke I refer to, you can proclaim eternal peace on earth Sign this declaration

*Billionaire* [*Without taking the document*] What declaration do you want of me?

*Gentleman in Gray* That you regard the enrichment of individuals as the most monstrous of evils

*Billionaire* That I

*Gentleman in Gray* You must It must come from you, the billionaire of billionaires Coming from you it will have importance, weight Like a lightning flash it will illuminate the battlefields where the opposing forces now

stand confronting each other armed to the teeth The white flag of peaceable discussion, that is what we will run up—understanding War will then become superfluous, the cause itself annulled You did not desire riches—circumstances forced you But there is a way to alter that condition, and a solution will be found and sought for in a spirit of brotherhood

*Billionaire* I hardly think . . .

*Gentleman in Gray* You alone, you alone can do it You make these gifts because you have to An inner force compels it But it was all in little until I came to show you the greater thing—and now you will sign with joy [*The BILLIONAIRE stands up*] Surely you do not mean to call your servants?

*Billionaire* I . . . [*Stands behind the chair thinking*]

*Gentleman in Gray* I knew you would

*Billionaire* I am going to explain to you

*Gentleman in Gray* Your signature

*Billionaire* [*Again repudiating*] Then you shall say whether I am able to sign that paper or not

*Gentleman in Gray* You must

*Billionaire* [*Returning to his seat*] Since it appears to be your wish to turn the whole order of things upside down, I must try to construct for you my world as it appears to me Do you know anything of my beginnings?

*Gentleman in Gray* Yes, your own powers

*Billionaire* My own weaknesses

[*GENTLEMAN IN GRAY looks at him disconcerted*]

*Billionaire* Or let us say—fear . . . dread Weakness and fear, then. But you will not grasp this in the space of a word or two My career—as they say—is told in every school book So it is a well known story which I am about to repeat The data will be the same, only I shall lend them a different significance My father was an employee in the factory which now belongs to me Whether he kept the furnace going under a cauldron or carried loads from place to place, I don't know At any rate, he did not earn much, for we lived in wretched circumstances One Monday—it was payday—he failed to come home He had been given notice to quit, for he was used up—and he had taken his last money and gone off with it He could never have provided for us any longer On that night my mother took her own life Somewhere in the house I heard a scream . . . I didn't run to see what

it was, I knew already—I was eight years old In that moment I knew what horror was, and it took root in me It stood before me like a gray wall that I must climb over to escape the horror that pursued me The horror made up of my father's staying off with his wages and my mother's scream set me on my way—drove me to flight It stood at my back as I worked—I found employment in the same factory It never left me even for a second—and I fled and fled before it—and flee still, for it stands behind me somewhere now as then

*Gentleman in Gray* You made a bewilderingly rapid rise

*Billionaire* Tireless diligence, tireless industry, tireless flight, nothing else. I must keep the distance ever wider between the horror and myself It drove me on No hope of quarter, that much I have learned It goaded me forward The mind becomes ingenious against a dread that freezes up the limbs There stood the machines which had sucked my father dry, hung my mother by the neck from a hook on a door, they would crush and maim me too unless I became their master first The factory, with its machines—with its people set between me and the horror—that was the first I ever knew of rest

*Gentleman in Gray* [*Brushing his hand across his forehead*] But after all such an experience occurs a hundred times a day . . . the father disappears, the mother

*Billionaire* It struck me down because I was particularly weakly I must have been, or I should have withstood it better Instead, I ran away as hard as I could go Have I said enough?

*Gentleman in Gray* [*Staggered*] I protest

*Billionaire* Against the weakling before you?

*Gentleman in Gray* Then you have no mercy on your fellow men . . .

*Billionaire* No fugitive may see whom he tramples underfoot

*Gentleman in Gray* [*Joyfully and with a searching regard*] Nevertheless—'The warm heart of the earth'.

*Billionaire* Certainly. I refuse to be brought in touch with poverty—it is too powerful a reminder I instituted the Open Thursday, therefore—I know then when to hide myself

*Gentleman in Gray*. Yet you sit here and listen to it all

*Billionaire* Error My Secretary sits here.

*Gentleman in Gray* [After a pause—sharply] Is that your cosmic plan?

*Billionaire* Not mine—it is the cosmic plan

*Gentleman in Gray* That each class is one of the stages of escape?

*Billionaire* All are fugitives

*Gentleman in Gray* And the fleetest . . . the

*Billionaire* Utterest cowards . . . yes . . .

*Gentleman in Gray* Triumph . . .

*Billionaire* My sort

*Gentleman in Gray* [Groaning, then with irony] Then I must rest my hope in a humanity without cowards

*Billionaire* Some will always be born more timid than the rest. The cause is of no consequence. It is a lever which sets itself in motion. Progress not whither but whence—your suspicions grow. Exactly. I express what you assume. And I am more familiar than you with this line of thought. Where do they come from, the great who inherit the world? They rise out of the dark because they were in the dark. And there experience the horror—this way or that. Blazing meteors that flare . . . and fall.

*Gentleman in Gray* [Mocking]. And when are you due to fall? [The BILLIONAIRE shakes his head, smiling] How have you insured yourself against the fate of meteors?

*Billionaire* I have a son. [The SECRETARY comes back. BILLIONAIRE rises, goes toward SECRETARY] Has the mistake been corrected?

*The Secretary* The list was complete

*Billionaire* Without my son?

*Secretary* He is not on the 'Freedom of the Seas.'

*Billionaire* But his companion is

*Secretary* They must have separated

*Billionaire* And he with orders not to stir from his side. [The SECRETARY is silent] I will have an explanation. At this moment I do not even know where my son is. Get into touch with his companion by radio. Let him report. Something must have happened. I do not understand how he can be traveling without my son.

*Secretary* Your son is young

*Billionaire* Tender chains that . . . ? We shall soon know the reason. [SECRETARY off again. The BILLIONAIRE comes back to his chair] Did my story affect you so deeply then?

*Gentleman in Gray* [Had leapt up as the SECRETARY entered. He is still staring at the

door through which he disappeared. Now he turns to the BILLIONAIRE] Do I see double? Is it you sitting here? Is it you who just went through that door? Is it yourself you were just speaking to?

*Billionaire* No. I was arranging a piece of business with my secretary.

*Gentleman in Gray* The Secretary—I are you brothers? But even then it would be .

*Billionaire* But possible, as you observe

*Gentleman in Gray* [Dropping into the chair] Horrible

*Billionaire* A common prank of Nature's. You'll find a repetition of each of us, if you try, of course. I had mine looked for—and I admit that fortune favored me.

*Gentleman in Gray* Fortune—?

*Billionaire* It serves many excellent purposes for me. I can be here and there without ever bestirring myself. Even at this Open Thursday I am present in my well-known person—and am perhaps on a fishing trip at some distant river.

*Gentleman in Gray* Do you still know which one you are?

*Billionaire* I imagine so

*Gentleman in Gray* But everybody else takes the Secretary for you?

*Billionaire* Except the two servants who guard my personal Secretary

*Gentleman in Gray* Otherwise you are indistinguishable?

*Billionaire* Except for a small and unobtrusive sign, a coral which the Secretary wears on his watch chain. The one of us who wears the coral is the Secretary.

*Gentleman in Gray* And only the servants know?

*Billionaire* They are detectives

*Gentleman in Gray* What if I should betray your secret?

*Billionaire* Who would believe you? It would be one more legend about me.

*Gentleman in Gray* [Shaking his head energetically] You've no coral on your watch-chain,—or—I didn't notice, were you wearing one before .

*Billionaire* No. I've talked to you since you came in in my own person, and if you wish to hear the rest—

*Gentleman in Gray* [Laughing] The end of your head-over-heels flight before the horror—or is there no end?

*Billionaire* In my son I have a daughter, but the stronger bond is with the son, of



course. Have you children? No Then you must allow me to know With a son one feels his continuation—one's own continuation—in his beginning That is a law that runs in the blood It is my most certain conviction that it is so Every father wishes that his son shall have it better than he did

*Gentleman in Gray.* And not know the horror, as you call it

*Billionaire* Need I say any more? It is all so obvious

*Gentleman in Gray.* And have you protected him?

*Billionaire* I let him live in brightness He has no contact with those things that scream and wail from your pamphlets I have led him along a bypath from all that

*Gentleman in Gray* Where do you keep him hidden?

*Billionaire* I don't keep him hidden. The earth has so many sunny strands

*Gentleman in Gray* Where the horror may be dreamt away

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*Gentleman in Gray* And have rest from flight, and blessed peacefulness.

*Billionaire* In paradise

*Gentleman in Gray* You found your outward double—the Secretary.

*Billionaire* Does that still excite you?

*Gentleman in Gray* No, there's method in it

*Billionaire* How do you mean?

*Gentleman in Gray* And now you're forming an inward double—your son

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*Billionaire* Do you still want to help me? With your declaration that I am to sign?

*Gentleman in Gray* [Pushing his newspapers, etc., still deeper into his pockets, breathing heavily] You've set me in a turmoil The air's thick here It presses the sweat out of one's paws

*Billionaire* Think it over at leisure

*Gentleman in Gray* It is too crazy—the 'Warm Heart of the Earth' . . . 'Open Thursday' . . . the results!

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whoever can, save himself on the first spot of firm ground he can find

*Gentleman in Gray* [Almost shouting]. Not you!

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*Secretary* [Goes on reading] 'On the Albatross'

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## ACT TWO

*Under the awning on the deck of the BILLIONAIRE's yacht A section of the railing, rear Heat mast over the calm sea*

*In white-enamelled wicker armchairs—BILLIONAIRE, the DAUGHTER, the MUSEUM-DIRECTOR, the DOCTOR, the CAPTAIN, all in white A negro sets out iced drinks Off, the SINGER's voice*

*Singer* [Lowering her voice on a long last note, comes in from the rear and trains her kodak on the group Breaks off as she snaps] Thanks [The rest look up surprised] for the advertisement On the high seas—aboard the most marvellous yacht in the world—and such an audience! We must have that on the record Every opera-house on earth will compete for a contract with me. [Dropping into

a chair beside the BILLIONAIRE] If you enjoyed hearing me—or am I mistaken? Tell me the truth—I have the picture, anyway

*Billionaire* [In some embarrassment] No, no, on the contrary, really extraordinary [The others clap applause]

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*Billionaire* [Hastily, to the MUSEUM DIRECTOR] Is the Tintoretto really no good at all?

*Museum Director* On the contrary—it is very fine, very fine indeed

*Billionaire* But you refused it when I offered it to you

*Museum Director* [Nods] Christ carrying the cross

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fore We are all sitting in that shadow—in one way or another it is a source of torment to us all We must get into the full light of things again—and shake off these cross-carriings At least that is how I see it It is a burden on us—a cross that we are made to carry—this mass of the past from which we can only free ourselves by acts of violence—or even crimes, if it should come to that

*Doctor* And do you consider it possible then—without self-deceiving?

*Museum Director* I don't know

*Doctor* I'm afraid the cross-carrying is inevitable

*Museum Director* One must truly desire the future

*Doctor* You might manage it in your gallery

*Museum Director.* My ambition goes no further

*Doctor* But in real life I doubt very much whether anyone can jump beyond his shadow

[A sailor comes with a report for the CAPTAIN, and goes]

*Captain* [Standing up To the BILLIONAIRE] The 'Albatross' is close by on the starboard side

*Billionaire* [Excited] Send the launch over [CAPTAIN goes]

*Doctor* Now we shall know all about the mystery-ship

*Singer.* And the matador

*Museum Director.* My curiosity is at snapping-point

*Daughter* I'm going up to flash the challenge across

*Billionaire* [Holding her back To the others] Please go ahead, we'll come in a moment [SINGER, MUSEUM DIRECTOR, and DOCTOR go]. I want to talk to you a second first

*Daughter* Now?

*Billionaire* It's only a question.

*Daughter* What is it?

*Billionaire* Could you consider—marrying the Museum Director?

*Daughter* I—I don't know

*Billionaire* I want to urge you to decide, because . . .

*Daughter* I hardly know him

*Billionaire* Nor I . . .

*Daughter.* Then how can you persuade me so?

*Billionaire* I sat listening to him just now,

and he impressed me as no other person ever did

*Daughter* Because he rejected your gift?

*Billionaire* I like his ideas That inner independence—his philosophy which admits only the future and annihilates the past . .

*Daughter* I wasn't listening to him

*Billionaire* You would give me great joy

*Daughter* Then it's superfluous to ask me to think it over

*Billionaire* [Shakes her hands] Now let us go and meet your brother [They go]

[Sound of bells and sirens Sailors open the railing rear and let down the companion Everybody comes back and leans over the railing Handkerchiefs wave Hellos]

*Doctor* [Coming under the awning] It's a clumsy old tub

*Museum Director* [Following him] Does credit to the name of 'Albatross'

*Doctor.* Could you see any other passengers aboard?

*Museum Director.* That may have been the charm of the voyage.

*Doctor* Thanks, not for me!

*Singer* [Joins them, holding camera behind her back] Discretion—family reunion!

[The SON, in a gray suit, comes up the stairway, and the daughter falls upon him with a storm of welcome The CAPTAIN stands by at the salute]

*Son.* Have you been lying in wait for me?

*Daughter* Up and down this spot for three days Glorious bore

*Billionaire* I planned a surprise for you

*Son* Well, you've succeeded brilliantly Your guests?

*Billionaire* A few intimates, that's all

[The SON goes from one to the other and shakes hands in silence Then he stands beside a chair, still without a word The awkward silence continues]

*Daughter* [Flinging herself into a chair] Bit too solemn for me

*Billionaire* [Indicating the chairs] Please [Everybody sits down, the SON last and hesitatingly The CAPTAIN comes back and sits down too]

*Son* [To him, astonished] Aren't we going on?

*Billionaire* I thought we might stay at sea another three or four days

*Son* Certainly, if you wished . . .

*Billionaire.* On your account

Son. What for?

Billionaire After your travels . . .

Daughter I say, I quite forgot to look at the 'Albatross' in all the excitement. Is she very swell? How many knots? [*The MUSEUM DIRECTOR and the DOCTOR laugh*]

Son What's the matter with the 'Albatross'?

Daughter We wanted to challenge her. Should we have had a good opponent?

Son You're laughing at her. No, sister, the 'Albatross' isn't an opponent at all in the way you mean.

Daughter [*Surprised*] Then why didn't you come on the 'Freedom of the Seas'?

Billionaire [*Uneasily, trying to change the subject*] Well, what about your impressions of the world's great cities?

Singer Did you visit the opera everywhere?

Son We may as well define the 'Albatross's' class—she's a coaler. You must know all the ships on these roads, Captain?

Captain I'm afraid the 'Albatross' had escaped me.

Son Why? [*The CAPTAIN smiles. To the others*] Why should it have? Don't other people travel on such ships?

Captain They are not arranged for passengers.

Son No, not for passengers. But what about the sailors. Aren't stokers people?

Musical Director [*After a pause*] You understand the refinements of pleasure.

Son What pleasure?

Museum Director It is the antithesis between the coaler and this yacht that enables you to savour its luxury as never before.

Son Or else to—[*Breaking off, and turning to the BILLIONAIRE*] Did you have a report from my companion?

Billionaire I did not speak to him.

Son But he must have got back two days ago.

Billionaire I've been lying out here for two days.

Son Are you displeased with him? I take all the blame. He did all he could to prevent it.

Billionaire [*Avoiding the subject*] Won't you change your clothes?

Daughter That's a city suit you have on.

Son It's a better protection against the coal-dust whirling about. And besides it was less noticeable—it's wiser to be part of the picture.

Billionaire Do so then—go and get into white from head to foot like us.

Son Please let me enjoy myself my own way.

Singer [*Busy with the camera*] Most interesting pictorial effect.

Son Is that the only way it strikes you?

Doctor In this extreme heat white clothing is a matter of health.

Billionaire There spoke our careful doctor—obey him.

Son [*With repressed sharpness*] Would you expect your professional advice to be followed in the engineroom too?

Doctor Scarcely.

Son Because you don't enforce it there. Because of the black coal they work with.

Doctor Exactly.

Son Therefore health down there must suffer, while up here it must be taken care of?

Museum Director You seem to have seen more things on your tour than you . . .

Son When it is the first trip, one keeps one's eyes wide open.

Daughter Did you meet any princes?

Singer Tell us all about it.

Son Every day.

Daughter Have you made any friends? Is anyone coming to visit you soon?

Son I could introduce five—ten—to you off my coaler. Come with me next time.

Museum Director Is this another?

Son Refinement of pleasure?

[*A sailor comes with a report to the CAPTAIN. The CAPTAIN goes to the DOCTOR and whispers to him. They go.*]

Son Aren't we going on now?

Billionaire I have given no orders.

Son What did the doctor go off with the captain for?

Singer One of the crew's had an accident, I expect.

Son Wouldn't you like to take a snapshot of it?

Daughter We might as well start moving—it would be one way of getting some air. This heat is really becoming unbearable.

Son And we're on deck.

Singer Is it cooler anywhere else?

Son No—hotter.

Singer Not possible!

Son Go below into the stoke-hole.

Billionaire Let's start going.

*Museum Director [ironically]* Mind the stokers

*Son* Do you know what it means to be by those furnaces?

*Museum Director* I have never sought the opportunity to try it

*Son* And a description would hardly interest you

*Museum Director* Oh, graphically done by an expert

*Son* I am an expert!

*Billionaire [to the DAUGHTER]* Please go and tell the captain . .

*Daughter* Full steam ahead!

*Singer* The ladies take over the command.

*Daughter* Here's where we make a new record We'll radio it to the papers tonight and tomorrow the whole world will burst with envy [*Goes off*]

*Son* Won't you stop that wickedness?

*Billionaire* The yacht has never shown her full capacity yet

*Son* Then I must ask you to drop me first

*Museum Director* The coaler has unaccustomed you to speed

*Son* No, to frivolity, perhaps

*Billionaire* You used to enjoy that sort of sport

*Son* I am ashamed to have come to a right mind so late

*Billionaire* What does that mean?

*Son* That I . . . [*Reflecting*] If I'm to take part in this record-making, I can only do it before the boilers

*Billionaire [to the MUSEUM DIRECTOR]* Don't keep the ladies waiting on the bridge [*The MUSEUM DIRECTOR goes To his SON, slowly*] Did you really travel on that ship as a stoker?

*Son* I couldn't hold out under it, so I had to become a passenger again

*Billionaire* Did it specially attract you to

*Son* Oh, the steamer is the least important part of it

*Billionaire* You saw much to wonder at in your travels

*Son* It was as though scales fell from my eyes The wrongs we are committing stood up clearly before me We rich here—and there the others, strangling in want and misery—but people like ourselves There's not a spark of right in it—why do we do it? I ask you why? Give me an answer that absolves us both, you and I.

*Billionaire [Staring at him]* You ask me? *Son* Yes, and I shall never stop asking you I have never been so grateful to you as now, never in my life You gave me that trip, and but for it I should have stayed blind to the end of my days

*Billionaire* You will forget

*Son* Forget what is in me now, and fills me through and through? That will only disappear when I disappear too

*Billionaire* What is in you?

*Son* The horror of that life which I have seen, with its toil and oppression

*Billionaire* Travel experiences are not enough to

*Son* Not enough?

*Billionaire* You exaggerate superficial impressions

*Son* They burn in my blood And the vividdest picture of all is the 'Freedom of the Seas' as she lay in her wharf Flags, music, passengers in light clothes strolling up and down the decks, chattering, gay And a few yards underneath their feet, hell Men feeding fire-belching holes, quivering bodies burning to death So that we may make speed, speed I had started to sail on that ship, I had set my foot on her deck—but I had to turn back—and only on that 'Albatross' I began to feel my conscience lighter

*Billionaire* And have you conquered all that now?

*Son* Now I feel it more than ever. Here on this wonderful private yacht of yours I feel the blood beating in my heart with shame Look at us lying back in these chairs in indolence, wailing about the heat the sun pours down on us We sip iced water for ease, and not a grain of dust irritates our throats And underneath the soft soles of your white shoes here, there are men with boiling fever in their veins Tear away this wall of wooden planks—see how thin it is, but yet how fearfully it divides—and look down, look down, all of you And the words will stick in your mouths before any of you will brag before one of them down there [*The Doctor strolls in*]

*Son [Springing toward him]* What was it, doctor?

*Doctor* A yellow stoker collapsed.

*Son* Dead?

*Doctor [Shaking his head]* Heat-stroke.

*Son* Where have you put him?

*Doctor* I had him laid in front of a ventilator shaft.



Son Not brought up here?

Doctor No

Son [*briefly*] Wait here [*He goes*]

Doctor [*Drops into a chair To the NGRON*]  
Ice water [*To the BILLIONAIRE*] I find this  
long drifting at sea extraordinarily quieting  
to the nerves I'd like to prescribe it for you  
five days every other month [*BILLIONAIRE*  
*does not move*] I promise myself success with  
this new diet I've put you on [*BILLIONAIRE*  
*silent*] Of course we can't offer you the keen  
and healthful excitement of meeting your son  
again, but your daughter will be able to in-  
vent surprises of a more moderate kind for  
you I'll talk to her about it [*Voices and*  
*footsteps approach The Doctor puts down his*  
*glass*] Are they playing deck games? [*SAIL-*  
*ORS bring the half-naked yellow stoler*]

Son This way

Doctor [*Standing up*] What does this  
mean?

Son Set two chairs together Take hold,  
doctor, this is a life and death matter [*To the*  
*SAILORS*] Lay him down [*To the NGRON*]  
Ice water [*To the Doctor*] Come over here,  
doctor, you understand this better than I  
Wash his chest [*To the BILLIONAIRE*] Will  
you allow your personal physician to lend a  
hand? [*To the Doctor*] Is it dangerous?

Captain [*Coming in—low, to BILLIONAIRE*]  
I couldn't prevent him

[*The BILLIONAIRE shakes his head de-*  
*cidedly The DAUGHTER and the*  
*SINGER come in*]

Son [*To the DAUGHTER*] Won't you help us  
here, sister? A man may be dying [*The*  
*DAUGHTER goes nearer*] Wet your hands in  
that ice water and lay them on his hot chest  
I am only calling you to your simple duty  
[*The DAUGHTER does so To the Doctor, be-*  
*side himself*] Doctor, save him—you've got  
to, or I am a murderer!

Billionaire [*Stares down at the group—his*  
*lips move—at last he mutters*] The horror!

Singer [*Focussing her kodak—to the MU-*  
*SEUM DIRECTOR*] I've never had pictures  
like these before [*She snaps*]

### ACT THREE

Square room with rear wall of glass—the  
BILLIONAIRE's work-room Right and left on  
the walls, from the floor to the ceiling, huge  
brown-toned photographs of factories Broad  
desk with swivel-chair, another chair at the side

Smokestacks outside, close and straight like  
pillars of dead lava holding up cloud-mountains  
of smoke

Billionaire [*At the desk*] How many dead?  
Secretary [*Standing by the desk*] The exact  
number of victims could not be ascertained,  
for the men who were saved and brought into  
the light, rushed away and had not reported  
yesterday

Billionaire What did they do that for?

Secretary They must have experienced un-  
told horror the three days they were shut up  
under the ground

Billionaire And now they flee from it,  
farther and farther?

Secretary They came up distracted as if  
from their graves, screaming and shuddering

Billionaire Whoever is absent from his  
place by the day after tomorrow will not be  
taken back again

Secretary [*Making a note*] By the day after  
tomorrow

Billionaire How did the meeting go? Was  
I contradicted? Was I allowed to speak with-  
out interruption?

Secretary No

Billionaire Was my life in danger?

Secretary It was indeed

Billionaire How did I protect myself?

Secretary I had requisitioned troops They  
were lined up before me ready to shoot

Billionaire Did anything happen?

Secretary Only one man kept yelling in-  
terruptions

Billionaire What did he say?

Secretary Murderer

Billionaire Was he not to be found?

Secretary The crowd covered him

Billionaire Let him be found Threaten to  
take steps if he is not delivered [*The SE-*  
*CRETARY makes a note*] Is everything quiet  
now?

Secretary The shaft is being worked again  
today

Billionaire What means did I use?

Secretary I announced the shutting down  
of the entire works

Billionaire Thanks [*A green lamp lights*  
*on the desk BILLIONAIRE takes up the receiver*  
*Surprised*] Who? My daughter?

Here? Yes, I will see her [*To the*  
*SECRETARY*] Replace me in Factory 24  
There has been an explosion there—I said I  
would be down during the afternoon [*The*



SECRETARY makes a note] Thanks [The SECRETARY leaves, left, through an invisible door The BILLIONAIRE stands up, makes a few rapid steps toward the wall right, changes his mind, returns to his chair and plunges into his work One of the servants opens a padded invisible door The DAUGHTER enters SERVANT goes The BILLIONAIRE looks round] Your first visit to your father's business house

Daughter [Looking about] Yes—I am seeing it for the first time

Billionaire Another world! . . . Is the matter so urgent that you couldn't keep it until this evening before the fire?

Daughter I can only explain it to you here

Billionaire Am I to prepare myself for the most joyful news?

Daughter What is that?

Billionaire I asked something of you that day we were waiting for your brother . . . On the yacht

Daughter [Shaking her head] I have never given that another thought

Billionaire [Suppressing his uneasiness Gaily] Really not?

Daughter It was on the yacht that I first saw my way

Billionaire To your brightest happiness?

Daughter To my inevitable duty

Billionaire [Lifts his hand high in protest] Not that!

Daughter [Calmly] When I took my hands from the seething breast of that yellow stoker they were marked. The scar sank into my blood, into my deepest heart I have no choice I feel the call And submit to it willingly You will show me the place where I shall best obey it

Billionaire What do you want to do?

Daughter Send me where the suffering is worst, to the injured in your factories I will nurse them

Billionaire You don't know what you are saying

Daughter I do You can at least respect my action by believing it I want to go to the shaft where the catastrophe happened

Billionaire What catastrophe?

Daughter You put down the agitation yourself

Billionaire Who carries you these tales?

Daughter Reports in the papers are forbidden Yes, I know you are powerful

Billionaire [Stares at her A pause] Let it be [He gets up and goes to her] I shall not

ask you with words You have a hundred to every one of mine It is an unequal fight between father and daughter The end is a foregone conclusion. [He takes her hands, looks intently at her.] No . . . no Such little hands . . . such weak hands [He anticipates her contradiction with a shake of the head] Yes, yes . . . strong and hard And only I know what for—to storm fortresses, to heap up ruins, and the victims under them Shall I tell you who the victim is?

Daughter Now I don't understand you

Billionaire Do you want to make me your victim? [DAUGHTER looks at him wonderingly] Then turn back. You will find your task lies nearer home Does it seem a paltry one to you? It seems important to me because it concerns your father.

Daughter [Drawing her hands away] I have no right, while others . . .

Billionaire Father and Daughter . . . not by quarrelling! Only by asking and yielding

Daughter. I thank you today for the lovely years of youth . . .

Billionaire And as lovely a future.

Daughter [Strongly]. Which will be a shining memory through my new life of duty [She stands up and puts out her hand] My decision was made so easily. Would you make it hard for me by having me change it?

Billionaire [Without taking her hand] Where are you going now?

Daughter To my sisters and brothers

Billionaire [In a dead voice] So that's where you're going

Daughter Will you still know me among the poorest of the poor?

Billionaire [Supporting himself against the desk] You're going there . . . [The DAUGHTER hesitates . . . turns to the door The SERVANT opens DAUGHTER goes The BILLIONAIRE falters . . . makes a timid gesture] There . . . there . . . there

[Then pulls himself together and rings The SECRETARY enters] Shut down the shaft [The SECRETARY makes a note] No! [Clutching his brow] It's here or there . . . it can't be blown away . . . no one has power to do that! [Firmly to the SECRETARY] My daughter wishes to dedicate herself to Samaritan work You will meet her at the shaft and wherever accidents occur in my factories Repudiate her . . . I know my daughter no longer

*Secretary* Does your daughter know about the coral?

*Billionaire* No, besides the two servants, nobody knows [*Business-like again*] We were interrupted

*Secretary* [*Reads from his notebook*] In the afternoon I represent you at Factory 24

*Billionaire* Tomorrow at noon I shall attend the first half of the Missions meeting myself, I am to be appointed honorary president. Come in the car at two. Under the pretext of fetching something I shall leave the hall. You return in my place and read my contribution to them. I'll give you the papers [*He looks for it in a drawer of the desk. The green lamp flashes*]

*Secretary* Telephone [*The BILLIONAIRE springs up—stares at the lamp*] I'll come back later to

*Billionaire* [*Brusquely*] Stay here! Go now. Yes later. [*The SECRETARY goes. The BILLIONAIRE takes the receiver up slowly*] Who [*He lets it fall from his slack fingers onto the desk. His mouth quivers*] My son [*The SERVANT admits the SON and goes. The BILLIONAIRE stiffly erect goes towards him*] I have not seen you the last few days

*Son* Since

*Billionaire* I am not asking where you were. The time is past for me to keep watch over your comings and goings. You must justify your actions to yourself now. You are grown up.

*Son* You make it easy for me

*Billionaire* Perhaps it was important to tell you this. Is that what you came for?

*Son* The reason

*Billionaire* I will not probe into you to find it out. Sit down. In this stern work-a-day room

*Son* Which you have always jealously kept me out of

*Billionaire* Is it your ambition to see yourself in my place?

*Son* Not in yours

*Billionaire* I'll not offer it to you. I'm not tired yet. The strings are still taut in my fingers. I shall, and can, go on working. The successor arrives too early. You shall not dethrone me today, nor tomorrow either.

*Son* That was not my intention

*Billionaire* It would help you to prepare your life accordingly

*Son* You narrow the field

*Billionaire* It is your only chance. The work is my share.

*Son* I know how you mean to go on

*Billionaire* You see, the gates are well barred

*Son* I stand compelled, and therefore I must pacify my conscience?

*Billionaire* A compulsion lies on you too

*Son* [*After a pause*] Will you answer certain questions that burn in me like fire?

*Billionaire* If our boundaries are sharply drawn and understood—yes

*Son* Such deep contradictions split all your dealings

*Billionaire* Do you concern yourself with me?

*Son* I can concern myself with nothing else

*Billionaire* What has made me so unexpectedly interesting?

*Son* This monstrous wealth that you have assembled

*Billionaire* I have already mentioned my working-powers

*Son* That is not working-power, it is .

*Billionaire* Wherein lies the riddle?

*Son* Here the ruthless profits . . . and there the limitless charity that you give. The 'Warm Heart of the Earth' and the stone that you must bear in your inmost soul.

*Billionaire* I don't want to solve that riddle for you

*Son* Because shame of confessing it holds you back

*Billionaire* It shall remain my secret

*Son* I tear at the veil you hide behind. You know your wealth is a mortal sin, and stifle knowledge with your "Open Thursday"

*Billionaire* The explanation would not suffice

*Son* No, these gifts of yours are absurd, ridiculous. You can't pay that way for the blood

*Billionaire* I shed?

*Son* No, those are accidents. But you threaten with bloodshed when they dare to cry out

*Billionaire* Did you see that?

*Son* Now I must confess what it nearly drove me to yesterday

*Billionaire* Why yesterday?

*Son* I was at the shaft while you were speaking. You had to appear there yourself to put down that uprising. I was down below in that haggard crowd—and saw you standing there behind the menacing guns. So cold and

far away Your words cracked down upon the gathering like bits of ice No one dared to lift his voice again Until you said the works would be shut down, and thousands—children and women—delivered up to hunger. That tore one mouth open

*Billionaire* So it was you . . .

*Son* Cried out murder!— And that was not the last

*Billionaire* It was the last I heard

*Son* Could I have but forgotten that it was my father standing up there—*[He reaches into his pocket, then lays a revolver on the table]* I do not wish to be tempted twice

*Billionaire* *[Shoves the gun aside]*. You wouldn't have hit me.

*Son* I meant to try it

*Billionaire* *[Shaking his head and smiling]* No, not me So this need not stand as a shadow between us two *[He puts out his hand]* Don't let it bother you

*Son* *[Staring at him]* Do you puff it away like a grain of dust on your coat?

*Billionaire* Not my coat

*Son* Forget and forgive?

*Billionaire* So there was nothing to forgive

*Son* No, not for you No one else can do that Not that One allots one's own atonement And I will make mine so heavy that maybe on my dying day I shall dare to raise my eyes again

*Billionaire* To me?

*Son* No, you've taken me back today You've got no time to waste

*Billionaire* Then whom do you set over you as judge?

*Son* The least of your workmen

*Billionaire* What does that mean?

*Son* Until another's despair drives him to the same, I shall stand down there with them

*Billionaire* In the uprising?

*Son* In the peace that will be spread around if I become one with them all, and no more than the least of them

*Billionaire* *[Pushes the revolver towards him]* The time is now. *[He turns his face away]*

*Son* *[Jumps up and runs to him]* Oh, tell me why all this should be—tell me why

*Billionaire* Come *[He leads him to the photographs]* See there? Grey factories Narrow yards *[Crossing to the great window rear]* Do you see that? Where is the earth here—grass blades—bushes—? From such as this I came Do you know my life?

I have kept it hidden from you But it is read in all the schools I had another life for you to live, and I have let you live it Yours, not mine . . . I came up out of nothing, so the books say I swung myself up out of that very poverty here—I tell you this now And I have never forgotten it Not for a single hour have I allowed myself to drowse I set these pictures about me—I made this wall of glass so that none of that might be hidden—it was to goad me into wakefulness should I ever fall weary and seek to rest It was for warning and admonition in my blood—only not down again—not down again to that

*Son* *[Withdrawing from him]* You . . .

*Billionaire* I can warn you, you'll believe me It swallowed up my father and my mother Its arm was already grasping after me—but I escaped

*Son* You know . . .

*Billionaire* A single moment upset you I have shuddered before it for a lifetime So terrible is life . . . Do you wish to go down there?

*Son* You tear the very last thing out of my hands

*Billionaire* What is that?

*Son* My only excuse for you—that never having known, you could not grasp the suffering of others

*Billionaire* I bear the cry within my breast

*Son* Are you a tiger? Worse, for the tiger knows not what he does You know the torture of your victims and . . . *[He grasps the gun, but lays it down again]*

*Billionaire* I or another . . .

*Son* Everyone is

*Billionaire* Be thankful to me

*Son* For this?

*Billionaire* That you need never be who I am

*Son* *[Calmly]* Your blood is mine . . .

*Billionaire* Do you feel it too?

*Son* It makes the task worth while

*Billionaire* Of saving me from the pursuing horror?

*Son* Of stifling these terrible desires, and holding steadfast by the side of the humblest of your employees *[BILLIONAIRE stands stiffly]* You can't prevent it I shall take work wherever I can find it

*Billionaire* *[Collapsing at his feet]* Mercy . . . mercy!!

*Son* *[Coldly]* Upon whom?

*Billionaire* Mercy!

*Son* And that may be my cry to you on the day you deny me and my comrades bread [Before the SERVANTS have the door fully open, he is gone, right]

*Billionaire* [Bounding up at last He looks for the revolver and thrusts it into his pocket] Not here in the heart of the woods Green bowers for the glazing eyes, a bit of blue heaven fluttering down, tinkle of little birds [Glancing sideways at the walls] Stopped? Cut off? . Failed in the flight? Overtaken? . [Swinging his arms about] Let me go! Don't touch me! With a child's terror I fear you, all of you! [He runs around the line of photographs, panting, beating upon them with his hands] A way out A way out

[Screaming] A way out! [SECRETARY enters from left Looks questioningly BILLIONAIRE stares at him]

*Secretary* [Embarrassed] You're—papers? [The BILLIONAIRE is silent] You wish to give me some papers?

*Billionaire* [Staggering to the desk and collapsing in a chair] Daughter and son down down My children have deserted me [SECRETARY silent BILLIONAIRE glances up at him] Do you understand what it means to have worked for your children all your life long—and then to have them come to you, their father, and knock the whole thing out of your hands?

*Secretary* Your son?

*Billionaire* [Crying out] Who will help now to pull down mountains—to cover this? [The SECRETARY looks at him inquiringly] Will no one help me now out of the darkness of my past?

*Secretary* Your achievements are so gigantic, your past needs no embellishment

*Billionaire* No ?

*Secretary* Your work stands out the greater for it

*Billionaire* I give it up—I'll pay with all my riches—I'll give my life in exchange for any other man's [Full of deep feeling] Who'll lend me a life that was bright from its first days on? In my son I can find that no more—down. Where is the exchange I have longed for and wooed in the fever of work and the rage for possession—on the heights of my mountainous riches? In whom can I now sink myself and lose this fear, this

turmoil that destroy me? Whose life—smooth and good life—for mine?

*Secretary* [Looking down at him with growing emotion] Your son has chosen another way No disappointment is bitterer But as it repeats itself so many thousandfold, it is as if it were a law Father and son strive away from each other It is always a struggle of life and death [Pause] I opposed my father too, and although I felt the hurt it was to him, yet I was forced to hurt him .

[After another pause] I don't know yet what it was that drove me to it The desire to try out life myself—perhaps it was that The need to stand alone is stronger than everything else [With heightened animation] There are few homes like mine I have a wonderful youth to look back upon. I was an only son Mother and father lavished an infinite treasure of love upon me And in the shelter of their care I saw and heard nothing of the wretchedness and irritations of everyday Sunlight lay on all our quiet rooms Even death passed us by My parents—even today, they still live only for me Then I passed into the little university, and the urge for independence began to possess me I broke away and went into the world . . . I have been through many a dark hour Buffeted here and there—but deep down nothing could shake me, for I possessed the greatest riches of all, endless and inexhaustible—the living memory of a happy childhood Whatever might come later could be only waves upon the surface of a lake whose clearness mirrored the blue of heaven So untroubled, so calm, within me lies that perfect past

[The BILLIONAIRE has raised his face toward him He listens with deepest intentness The SECRETARY gazes into space]

*Billionaire* [Looking about the table] The papers [SECRETARY gives them to him He speaks with a great effort] Go [The SECRETARY takes the papers, turns to the door The BILLIONAIRE pulls the revolver out of his pocket and presses the trigger His SECRETARY, shot through the back, falls The BILLIONAIRE stands immobile] My life—for another's that was bright from the first day on [Goes slowly forward to the body and bends down slips the coral off the watch-chain Holds it before him on his open palm] This is the life I thirst for every day

of this life . . . I covet and long for.  
*[Flings back his head]* Those bright days shall  
 make me happy . . . *[He slips the coral on  
 his watch-chain Then wrenches open the door  
 and shoots again into the air The two SERV-  
 ANTS rush in One remains in the doorway  
 standing—the other bends over the SECRETARY]*

*First Servant [In the doorway]* The coral?  
*Second Servant [Kneeling upright, shaking  
 his head]* Arrest the Secretary.

#### ACT FOUR

*Room of examining magistrates—blue square  
 with many entrances by iron-barred doors be-  
 hind which narrow passages lose themselves  
 A hanging lamp of clear glass lights the place  
 brightly One small iron table at which the  
 clerk—with eye-shade—is seated*

*The FIRST JUDGE is standing in an atti-  
 tude of reflection The two SERVANTS, left  
 GUARD comes in, right.*

*First Judge* Put the light out.

*[GUARD strides to switchboard, the lamp  
 goes out Frosted lamps glow in the  
 corners]*

*First Judge [Goes to the table and takes up  
 the receiver]* Relief, please. *[To the SERV-  
 ANTS]* You may now . . . *[on second  
 thoughts]* Or wait another minute or two  
*[He has the clerk give him the dossier, reads,  
 shakes his head To the SERVANTS]* Did the  
 secretary ever allow the coral to . . .  
*[Quickly]* It is possible that the coral had  
 been exchanged for once, to . . . *[The SEC-  
 OND JUDGE comes in, rear]*

*Second Judge* No result

*First Judge [Gives him the papers]* Nothing  
 more than that I now have certain doubts

*Second Judge* There's something like genius  
 in the consistency with which he persists  
 in masking his person.

*First Judge* His silence is certainly consistent  
 enough

*Second Judge* He does not respond to the  
 most obvious inquiries as to his earlier life—  
 after all the foundation of every examination.  
 But he receives them all as though he him-  
 self did not know We have had to gather  
 the data all ourselves

*First Judge* Yes, it seems as unknown to  
 him as though he heard of his own life today  
 for the first time

*Second Judge* Is he simply leading us  
 on . . .

*First Judge* What do you mean by that?

*Second Judge* Are we to preach his past to  
 him?

*First Judge* To what end?

*Second Judge* To wear us out

*First Judge* He's almost done that to me  
 already

*Second Judge [Reads—lets the sheet fall]*  
 He does not argue the point about the coral  
 having been found on him.

*First Judge* But he refuses to admit he's  
 the secretary

*Second Judge* Then how does he explain the  
 coral on his watch-chain *[Reading]* "This  
 repeated question the prisoner consistently  
 refuses to answer."

*First Judge [To SERVANTS]* Was there  
 never a plan to confuse you in the same con-  
 nection for certain purposes?

*First Servant* No Our task would have  
 been impossible if there had been

*Second Servant* The murdered man set  
 great store by the personal watch he set over  
 his person

*Second Judge* It's perfectly transparent to  
 me Of course, it's a matter of the fellow's  
 neck That's a thing one rather jabs at But  
 we have the son's affidavit In the conver-  
 sation that had taken place just before be-  
 tween father and son, the son renounced his  
 father's riches The daughter renounced it  
 too The secretary had heard the excited talk  
 next door and could not withstand the tempta-  
 tion to make himself their successor So he  
 made no bones about it and went ahead Only  
 the coral he hadn't time to exchange, though  
 he would have liked to *[To the SERVANTS]*  
 The shot brought you there at once

*Second Servant* I got him as he was trying  
 to make it out of the door

*Second Judge* Did he try to get away?

*First Servant* We didn't open the door—he  
 did

*First Judge* Why should he run away when  
 he gives himself out for the one who was  
 attacked?

*Second Judge [Puts the dossier down]*  
 That very attempt at flight proves it The  
 report made more noise than he had reckoned  
 with He was bewildered and expected to get  
 away, but the plan was knocked to pieces by  
 the servants' watchfulness Now he has to  
 recall the part he first meant to play.

*First Judge* But the resemblance is extraordinary, anyway I've never experienced such a case of doubles

*Second Judge* Yes, if it weren't for the coral, we should be groping in the dark and never find a way out [*Seizing the papers*] Besides, how does he account for the attack which is alleged to have been made by the secretary?

*First Judge* He says nothing

*Second Judge* Because there never was such an attack

*First Judge* But you said he wished to put himself in the murdered man's place

*Second Judge* [*Wavers*] So that would be a reason, wouldn't it?

*Second Judge* To prompt him to kill

*First Judge* So he acted under stress

*Second Judge* [*Excited*] But he is the secretary

*First Judge* [*Rubbing his eyes*] I am really worn out The sharp light—the passiveness of that man who hardly bothers to defend himself —

*Second Judge* I am thinking of disposing of certain means to make him more active If showing him the coral has no effect [*He picks it up from the table*] The thing looks like a drop of blood still hanging onto the murderer [*He lays it down To the SERVANTS*] I don't need you any longer

*First Servant* What time tomorrow?

*Second Judge* Let's hope this is the last Ten times over the same litany If you're needed, I'll send for you [*They go*]

*First Judge* Do you promise yourself better success tonight?

*Second Judge* Nothing more than a full confession

*First Judge* [*Taken aback*] How do you expect to bring him to that?

*Second Judge* He insists he's the billionaire Very well, I'll bring his children to face him Now nature can be the judge If he hesitates a single moment to approach them—for we know by their own testimony that he loved his son and daughter above everything—then he has as good as confessed He can face the coral—it's a dead object—but before the weight of his victim's son and daughter's eyes nobody could stand up And as he is no professional criminal, I'll have him break down like a straw

*First Judge* Honestly, I'm completely played out

*Second Judge* Stretch out on the sofa and have a good sleep If you don't mind my disturbing you, I'll shout the news of our deliverance from this fortnight's martyrdom across to you

*First Judge* I'll go straight to the country for a week

*Second Judge* And I'll write a book about the case—popular edition of several hundred thousand! [*FIRST JUDGE goes off SECOND JUDGE goes towards left and rings a bell beside a door Led in by a GUARD, the SON and DAUGHTER in black—left*] It is after all necessary that I bring you actually to confront the man Gladly as I would have spared you this painful experience, the obstinate denial which my colleague has been unable to break down in him forces me to this step I see no other way to get a confession out of him And we must have the confession absolutely

*Son* Instruct us how we are to behave

*Second Judge* I intend to deal a surprise blow He must not be allowed the least time for reflection I must ask you to come absolutely noiselessly and not in any way to betray your presence here For the present wait there in the back of the corridor—the guard stands round about the door That won't strike him as peculiar [*To GUARD*] During the hearing I shall arrange to come this side so that the prisoner will have his back to your door As soon as I pull out my handkerchief, admit the lady and gentleman

*Son* Is our task over when we have confronted him?

*Second Judge* Obviously, I shall see that it last no longer than it must But try to look at him intently That is important Especially you, madam, I should like to impress this upon Take hold of yourself You are about to experience the most horrible thing one could well encounter You will think you are looking at your father who is dead

*Son* But some distinction must be possible

*Second Judge* We should have had it easy, then The resemblance is complete No bodily mark exists Nature has played this trick on us

*Son* Only that coral can decide?

*Second Judge* And irrevocably Therefore do not forget that you have the secretary before you [*SON and DAUGHTER off left with the GUARD The GUARD comes back and waits behind the iron-barred door To the FIRST*



GUARD ] Bring him in [*The GUARD switches on the light Off right* SECOND JUDGE *puts on blue-glass spectacles* GUARD *lets the BILLIONAIRE precede him into the room and remains at the door His hands are bound in front of him with thin steel rope He prepares to stand as he is now accustomed to do—without a sign of excitement* SECOND JUDGE *for the moment does not notice him Then he takes the revolver from the table and goes—merely interested in the weapon—to the BILLIONAIRE* ] Where do you buy this make? [*BILLIONAIRE is silent* ] I'd like one myself But I can't very well pinch one that the law has confiscated [*BILLIONAIRE smiles thinly* ] A close-kept secret?

*Billionaire* A present

*Second Judge* Indeed? Who from?

[*BILLIONAIRE shakes his head* ] Surely from no tender hand

*Billionaire* From the tenderest.

*Second Judge* Oh, come, that is unnatural.

*Billionaire* Yes—it was unnatural

*Second Judge* Was it for you to use on yourself if ever you should be untrue?

*Billionaire* I was the target

*Second Judge* Who wanted to shoot you?

[*BILLIONAIRE slowly nods his head* ] Did you tear the weapon out of his hand?

*Billionaire* He put it down on the desk

*Second Judge* [*Quickly* ] The Billionaire? [*BILLIONAIRE silent The SECOND JUDGE nods with relief and goes to the right* ] Let's reconstruct the situation Turn towards me [*BILLIONAIRE does so* ] Wait a bit The metal's got a bit dull—it must have shone rather before [*He pulls out his handkerchief and rubs it The GUARD left, moves back from the door* ]

*The Second Judge* Of course it's all poppycock about the gun lying about on the table In fact your whole story is so completely muddled that there's no use trying to grope for sense in it any more The long and short of the matter is this under some pretext or other you got behind your victim's back, pulled the gun out of your trousers pocket, and stood all set and ready, exactly as you see me standing now, with this same distance between you—[*The GUARD has come in with the SON and DAUGHTER They stand waiting* ] Turn your back!

*The Billionaire* [*Turns around Without hesitation he goes toward his SON and DAUGHTER* ] Children! In black? Has there been a

death—close to us? You wonder why I don't know of it. I am out of touch with you all for the present, locked up under the strictest watch An intolerable error that must be cleared up first I am all imaginable pains to destroy this dreadful suspicion. But the courts are conscientious Every trifle has weight A bit of coral that was found on me—the revolver there which I am supposed to have carried in my pocket [*To the SON* ] Will you not explain where it came from?

*Son* [*Mastering his agitation* ] It is my property, sir.

*Second Judge* How did it come into the secretary's possession?

*Son* I laid it on the table by my father

*Second Judge* Valuable information The revolver, lying on the open table-top, prompted the deed What did you give it to your father for?

*Son* I—cannot answer that question

*Billionaire* I have not betrayed you, either

*Son* [*Sharply* ] Because you know nothing about it

*Billionaire* You seem to be talking to someone else, not to me. Have I become a stranger to you because I stand under suspicion? [*With a strangely watchful expression* ] Do you both believe I am the secretary? You—my own children—are you seeing the secretary in me?

*Son* [*Wearily* ] Sir, do you need my sister and me here any longer? [*The DAUGHTER screams—covers her face with her hands* ]

*Second Judge* I thank you, no [*The SON, supporting the DAUGHTER, go The JUDGE walks up and down the room* ] Monstrous The utmost extreme of stubbornness!—Are you not ashamed? [*Disconcerted* ] Smiling, are you?

*Billionaire* I saw my children —

*Second Judge* Do you take pleasure in other people's torment?

*Billionaire* But they did not see me

*Second Judge* They saw the murderer of their father. You are he You—his secretary Don't bring your idiotic fairy-tale forward again, please—we know it And were the coral not the powerful proof it is, this would have unmasked you—that those two whom you brazenly pretended were your children, rejected you as an utter stranger

*Billionaire* [*Imperviously* ] That—does not suffice

*Second Judge.* Are you sure? Because you

refuse your confession? We excuse you that now You may continue to shroud yourself in your monumental silence The time has come for us to speak! [*He signs to the GUARD who leads the BILLIONAIRE away The JUDGE telephones*] Relief, please [*Loudly*] Yes—relief! [*Goes excitedly up and down Stamps angrily*] This is [*FIRST JUDGE hastens in, rear*] You thought you heard wrong, I expect No, there's no change The man is not to be caught He confronts them without a tremor—and finds fault with them for talking coldly to him [*The FIRST JUDGE reads*] We're done now, I think

*First Judge* No I'm for pressing him hard—this thing interests me [*Striking his brow*] Simple as daylight!

*Second Judge* Were you enlightened in a dream?

*First Judge* I am furious

*Second Judge* Hardly the state of mind for brilliant discoveries

*First Judge* He's transubstantiated himself into the billionaire

*Second Judge* And expects to stay there

*First Judge* Therefore we must now reverse the process —

*Second Judge* Abracadabra—one, two, three

*First Judge* And get him back into the secretary

*Second Judge* By what sleight of hand do you mean to effect this?

[*The GUARD comes in at the right and switches off the arc-light*]

*First Judge* He must be born all over again!—That's it! I'll put him back in his cradle and let him kick and crow as happy as the day's long So far the Billionaire has never entered his life—that is a later chapter not to be recalled by a single syllable I'll set him up such a hole-proof picture of his life and wrap him so gently and gradually in childhood recollections that he shall entirely forget what he's here for [*Searching through the papers*] We've all the material here—not a detail missing A strikingly bright and happy past, too, he hasn't hardened all the way through yet I shall have him as soft as butter once I start bringing his good days back to him

*Second Judge* He didn't mind facing his victim's children —

*First Judge* Children are something else

In the last resort it is one's own life that counts

*Second Judge* I should hate to give up the case as hopeless

*First Judge* Everything we've tried so far has fallen through, and my attempt may do the same But there is a certain power of suggestion in delving into the past

*Second Judge* Would you like the glasses?

*First Judge* We'll have the lights down this time [*To GUARD*] Don't switch on the light Bring him in [*GUARD goes, right*] That alone will be a kindness to him And for the rest I shall find the right "Now Granny will tell you a story" tone

*Second Judge* With the wicked wolf at the end

*First Judge* That gets hold of the murderer [*The SECOND JUDGE goes The GUARD comes in with the BILLIONAIRE The FIRST JUDGE is deep in the documents before him*] This love of animals is truly beautiful [*Glancing up at the BILLIONAIRE*] Had it really a black spot in the middle of its forehead? [*The BILLIONAIRE raises his head obediently*] The puppy you saved from drowning The river was pretty shallow there, I daresay? One doesn't venture very far out at ten years old [*The BILLIONAIRE breathes heavily*] Just a bit of a stream running by the little town, wasn't it? No strong current, of course—or did the tides run high in spring? [*The BILLIONAIRE begins to sway curiously from the waist*] Then the water would go sweeping by with all sorts of bushes and things it had uprooted, and sometimes it flooded the banks and got into the cellars That meant saving the family stores, and what a jolly salvaging party it always was! Father and Mother at it as hard as they could go and the boy helping like a Trojan, naturally Always in everybody's way, but convinced that he was being absolutely indispensable, eh? [*The BILLIONAIRE nods slowly*] Yes—a little bit of a town like that has its catastrophes too Every day a different one The wind pulls the cap off a fellow's head and rushes round the corner with it — [*Suddenly*] What colour was your school-cap—green?

*Billionaire* [*With a chuckling smile*] I've

*First Judge* You don't remember the colour distinctly?

*Billionaire* I've forgotten so much

*First Judge* [*Sharply watching him After*



a pause] Doesn't that sort of thing last long with you? I mean one usually likes to recall one's pleasant times long after they're gone. After all, they're our only indestructible possession. You especially could refresh yourself with your remembrances, for the picture of your past is remarkably charming and bright. Yes, you had an enviable youth. [*Turning over the documents*] It is a pleasure even to read about it. [*BILLIONAIRE stealing a look into the papers*] Light and sunshine—sunshine and light. No trace of a shadow anywhere. [*Glancing up*] You must be inexpressibly grateful to your parents, aren't you?

*Billionaire* [*In a tone almost like singing*] My parents . . .

*First Judge* I see them with their hands outspread over their only child in a gesture of infinite love. Did they ever once strike you?

*Billionaire* Did they . . . never once strike me?

*First Judge* Yes, tell me.

*Billionaire* Yes . . . you tell me.

*First Judge* [*Looks at him in astonishment. Then jestingly*] Very well, let us now open the Book of the Past. Chapter one—The Home. A little provincial town set in a pleasant green landscape. Father—pastor. Do you see him now?

*Billionaire* [*Groping before him*] . . . set in a green landscape . . . Father . . . pastor . . .

*First Judge* Chapter two—The son is born and becomes the centre of life at the parsonage. Every care is lavished on him. He waxes and thrives. You will hardly remember your very earliest childhood?

*Billionaire* Now . . . I remember.

*First Judge* In the next section you're fairly under way. School-days. The school is not large . . . there are few pupils, and you are the best among them. Learning comes easily to you . . . you encounter no obstacles . . . this period is a thornless path. Or perhaps you remember a cloud?

*Billionaire* If you know of none . . .

*First Judge* Good, then there was none. Let's go on. This, then, was the frame in which your life was set. It is seldom that a young man has things made as smooth for him as they were for you . . . and your own inclinations met your parents' plans half way. To a rare degree you developed the capacity for becoming a happy man. I can think of

nothing finer than this complete harmony between a person and his environment. No disrupting experience to poison the blood. Only the quiet succession of days like flowers on the chains children weave! . . . [*Intensely*]

Doesn't it flood your heart with warmth to hear me recite this evangel of your past to you? It must awaken in you such wistful longing for that paradise you used to wander in . . . in your so cherished and favoured youth. Sheltered and loved—protected against the blows that others have to suffer even at that age. It is like looking into a crystal sea, clear down to the very bed where only bright round pebbles lie on the white sand and nothing else. Say yes to that happy past of yours—and save the most precious of all possessions.

*Billionaire* . . . the best . . . of all possessions . . .

*First Judge* [*In growing excitement*] Do you say yes to that past?

*Billionaire* [*Faintly breathing the words*]. Yes . . . yes . . . yes!

*First Judge* Now you will sign your deposition.

*Billionaire* [*Already raising his hand*] Yes.

*First Judge* [*To GUARD*] Undo his hand. [*To the BILLIONAIRE*] Your acquiescence has convicted you. That past is the secretary's. You are the secretary. [*As the BILLIONAIRE hesitates*] I am telling you this so that you sign correctly—with the secretary's name. [*The BILLIONAIRE writes in the air*] What are you doing? Can't you remember your own handwriting any more? [*The BILLIONAIRE signs*] The examination is closed. I hope that you will not return again to your former denial of your identity. From now on it would be useless. [*He signs to the GUARD*]

*The Billionaire* [*As the GUARD leads him out, right*] . . . The best . . . the best . . . [*He goes*]

*First Judge* [*Stands thinking. Then telephones*] Comprehensive confession.

*Second Judge* [*Entering*] It sounds like a fairy-tale really. [*Reads in the dossier*] Worked like a charm. Didn't he see the trap you were decoying him into?

*First Judge* [*Ruminating*] Don't you think it extraordinary?

*Second Judge* He was overtired.

*First Judge* That was not my impression. In fact he seemed to come to life as he listened.

to his past [*The GUARD enters, right Quickly*]  
Has he anything to tell me?

*Second Judge* Hasn't he already gone back to the other?

*Guard* No

*Second Judge* Has he gone to pieces?

*Guard* He stands up straight, looking upwards and muttering

*First Judge* Just as he did here in a dream

*Second Judge* [*After a silence*] Well, there's a terrible awakening in store for him

## ACT FIVE

*Small square yard sunk between the shafts of prison-walls on four sides Patch of mean grass with iron bench in the centre, fastened into the ground A low door left and a high, narrow door rear*

*GUARD leads BILLIONAIRE in from the left, a convict now in black linen with red neckband*

*Billionaire* The ante-yard of death?

*Guard* You have an hour to stay here

*Billionaire* [*Nods*] The last short hour has struck [*Looking about*] A gentle custom feet tread upon green grass and heaven's blue streams overhead [*He stands motionless*]

*Guard* Do you wish to see your visitors?

*Billionaire* Ah—the curious have come? I shall not resist [*GUARD goes BILLIONAIRE sits on the bench GUARD admits the MAN IN GRAY, and goes*]

*Man in Gray* [*Has undergone an obvious transformation His suit—the same colour as before—is immaculately tailored He wears light spats over patent leather shoes, gray top hat with rounded crown, white kid gloves with black stitching Comes rushing in at the BILLIONAIRE, stretching out his hand*] Still in time This is luck indeed I should have put in an appearance before this, but business, you know Brimstone mine big thing Yearly profits of But for the moment you're rather out of that world of income and dividends and so forth, of course Besides I didn't come here to talk to you on that subject I came to thank you

*Billionaire* I didn't know

*Man in Gray* You don't mind if I sit down beside you, do you on the bench of repentance One can have at least a quarter of an hour's peace and quiet Well,

then, from the bottom of my heart, thanks, thanks, and thanks again

*Billionaire* I wish you would tell me

*Man in Gray* I am the Man in Gray who came to you once with a manifest that was to give harmony to all the world at one single stroke—and you refused to sign it At the same time—the thing I find most admirable about it now is that you should have taken the time, I shouldn't have—you demonstrated to me the hopelessness of my beneficent project Your arguments struck me like the blows of a club and I left the 'Warm Heart of the Earth,' hurling curses back at you strong enough to fell an ox. Is it getting dark?

*Billionaire* [*With a thin smile*] You are mistaken

*Man in Gray* I wished you straight into the deepest pit of hell

*Billionaire* Not me

*Man in Gray* You never felt the impact?

*Billionaire* Because the conversation you refer to was with the Billionaire, not with me

*Man in Gray* [*Laughs unrestrainedly*] You need not play your rôle before me Just put your secretary in your pocket Or perhaps you haven't one in these pyjamas they put you in for the night without end? [*Tapping him on the shoulder*] You're still my man fleeing from the terror

*Billionaire* [*Taken aback*] Don't talk so loud

*Man in Gray* Don't worry—I shall neither betray you nor set you free Surely I have no cause for such an act of ingratitude Are you satisfied with me?

*Billionaire* You are the only one

*Man in Gray* Your trial was a pleasure to me I wouldn't have disturbed it at any price It was a stroke of genius to shove yourself into the secretary's skin and lap up the candy of his bright past I could hear your lips smacking as they kept stuffing you with that glorious grub How does your stomach feel now—good?

*Billionaire* It was salvation

*Man in Gray* While the son—that rebirth you'd arranged for yourself, all peace and joy and so forth—turned away from you

*Billionaire* Not a word of that!

*Man in Gray* But you have no more to fear now And from the safe bank one can look back over the turbulent sea with a malicious joy that is wholesome too You've saved

yourself—and in a few minutes your head won't be in danger from it any more You can be sure of that

*Billionaire* What do you thank me for?

*Man in Gray* Does not a casual glance upon my outer man tell you that?

*Billionaire* You are dressed with a sort of challenging splendour

*Man in Gray* Merely to illustrate the inner structure I'm in flight

*Billionaire* You? From what?

*Man in Gray* From the world as you made it

*Billionaire* Then are you not going to curse me again?

*Man in Gray* I bless you You took me out of my pink clouds and set me on sober earth Bolt upright on both feet Your law ruled—flight! Woe to the stumbler, tramp him down The flight surges over him, on and away No grace, no mercy Forward—forward! Chaos is behind!

*Billionaire* And did you gain on it?

*Man in Gray* I was a good pupil I heap up riches and set that glittering hill between them and me Immense energy develops when once the law is known Even in sleep one races on and springs out of bed in the morning with new plans ready A wild chase Thank heaven you did not take your secret with you to the grave—now I can announce to all mankind its true salvation

*Billionaire* Will you do that?

*Man in Gray* It is already done My leavings set them all wildly scrambling All bonds snapped, the fight rages all along the line Each against each, no hope for quarter

*Billionaire* And what is the goal you are storming towards?

*Man in Gray* Nonsense, there is no goal

*Billionaire* But there is

*Man in Gray* [Looks at him disconcerted] Don't torture me

*Billionaire* It lies in the beginning

*Man in Gray* Yes—you had all the luck You can afford to laugh at us Besides you removed the cause that spurs on the race But that remains a single instance—we can't all find a double in this world And I'll tell you something, too [With a gesture round his neck] And most of us would shy at the price too

*Billionaire* Do you call it high?

*Man in Gray* [Standing up] You can best estimate that yourself according to your own

measure You were never pettifogging when it came to paying the bill I should like to stay longer, but your time is limited too Anyway let it be some joy to you that your great discovery will not vanish with you. [Offering both his hands] Head up, then!

*Billionaire* As long as it lasts

*Man in Gray* [Laughs Waving his hat] Au revoir!

*Billionaire* Where?

*Man in Gray* Well—what is the correct leave-taking in a case like this anyway! [The GUARD opens the door rear The MAN IN GRAY goes The BILLIONAIRE sits on the bench without moving, his chin on the back of his hand The GUARD admits the SON GUARD goes]

*The Son* [Hesitates—then goes quickly to the BILLIONAIRE, reaching out his hand] I have come—to forgive you [The BILLIONAIRE looks slowly up at him] Don't you recognize me?

*Billionaire* Oh, yes

*Son* My decision has taken you by surprise Perhaps it is strange that a son should do such a thing But that is the least I want to save you

*Billionaire* Have you climbing-irons and rope-ladder all ready?

*Son* I will recognize you as my father [The BILLIONAIRE stands up and goes behind the bench] Don't make it harder for me than it is already I am as guilty as you, for I had aimed that gun at him, I had meant that very bullet for him, too It's of no importance who it was that fired

*Billionaire* This is all incomprehensible to me

*Son* Believe me guilty with you, so that I need not flounder any longer in these frightful things

*Billionaire* But have you considered what I did?

*Son* You did what we must all do at the sight of madness dancing in power

*Billionaire* Was your father mad?

*Son* Power is madness

*Billionaire* Yes he was powerful

*Son* And guilty! Behind your guilt stands his—colossal and inextinguishable You are his victim as I am—as all others who think at all

*Billionaire* And do they all desire to kill?

*Son* They must—the compulsion is not to be withstood The temptation comes from those who thrust themselves above them By

force they rise, by force they shall be torn down

*Billionaire* You make it easy for yourself

*Son* Did not my final confirmation come from you? I know your life—I read the reports breathlessly as they appeared The sweetest childhood, the gentlest youth—where was there a sign of impulse to violence?

*Billionaire* Your childhood was no less sweet

*Son* And yet I sought a weapon when the time came I meant to punish, being swept away by my sense of justice—you meant to enrich yourself The sight of force seduced you My father set you the example—he always acted regardless of others—and so long as such examples are before us, so long will we be tempted

*Billionaire* Do you mean to wipe out evil example—is that it?

*Son* With your help

*Billionaire* What can I do?

*Son* You are to renounce your position so high above the rest of us and come down to our level

*Billionaire* Your father should do this, you mean

*Son* I shall go to the judge and declare that from this conversation with you I realized that you were my father after all

*Billionaire* And the coral?

*Son* Nothing must stand in the way We have an immense task before us The fate of mankind is at stake We shall unite in the heat of work—and in our untiring zeal we shall be bound together as father and son

*Billionaire* [Shaking his head] No—I could never so belie myself

*Son* When your life depends on it?

*Billionaire* Because the life you offer me depends on it

*Son* It will take some overcoming It cost me a struggle to come to you like this But I did so for the sake of higher things My father's shadow stands behind you now Serve this work and you will drive it away

*Billionaire* Not that way

*Son* I swear to you

*Billionaire* What?

*Son* That I will be a son to you—a son who never lost his father

*Billionaire* [Comes close to him] Shall I name my condition?

*Son* Anything

*Billionaire* Will you be the son to me that your father wished you to be?

*Son* What does that mean?

*Billionaire* Go back again to the bank where the sun is shining—then I shall lend myself to your wish [*The Son stares at him*] Otherwise the shadow that stands behind me will never be driven away

*Son* How are you talking to me?

*Billionaire* Like your father Is this first test too hard? [*The Son looks at him now timidly* *The BILLIONAIRE puts his hand on his shoulder*] It is good of you to have come once more One loves to look at people who are young Have you not a sister? Was she also ready to accept me as her father? You are decoys, but there are no more bridges I am only more convinced than ever now Leave me in my garden here Green, is it not? And go on to your battlefield It may be that peace does lead to war, but the man that comes out of that bath of blood tries to save himself You would not help me, so I took my fate into my own hands Should you rebuke me now, then, for refusing to lend you my support? [*He leads him towards the left*] In no hour of your active life are you to abuse me You have made bold plans and if one or other of them should fail or if, in the long run, they all should fail don't belabour your father's memory with rage and reproaches for his not protecting you against disappointment for reasons which it would obviously take too long to go into here [*The PRIEST comes*] There, you see—the one indispensable element is lacking—time! [*The Son goes* *The BILLIONAIRE stands looking after him* *The PRIEST has gone to the bench and looks at the BILLIONAIRE, who turns towards him*] The third and last guest?

*Priest* After what I have just seen, my task is very hard You have received the greatest consolation your fellow-men could give you—reconciliation with the son of that unfortunate father

*Billionaire* You are mistaken We parted at odds with each other And if I accompanied him to the door, that was because I was the stronger of the two I was supporting the defeated

*Priest* Did he not come to see you?

*Billionaire* He set a trap for me to fall into But I was on my guard

*Priest* Did he forgive you?

*Billionaire* Had he reason to?

*Priest* You took his father from him  
*Billionaire* [*Sitting down*] Do you believe in the right of reprisal?

*Priest* Earthly things must be allowed to run their course

*Billionaire* I exercised the right of reprisal, nothing more

*Priest* What injury had he done you?

*Billionaire* The choice falls blindly this one or another They killed my mother and father both

*Priest* [*Shrugs his shoulders*] Your parents met a peaceful end

*Billionaire* Then what reason could I have had to kill?

*Priest* In an incomprehensible turmoil of spirit you stretched out your hand for another man's riches

*Billionaire* [*Nods*] In an incomprehensible turmoil—that stamps your wisdom You roll heaven from over me to breathe in joy beneath You overwhelm me with your gifts

*Priest* [*After a pause*] You wished to have the coral, I have brought it for you [*The BILLIONAIRE takes it and looks at it*] You can dismiss me, if you wish . . . or close your ear to my words

*Billionaire* Speak

*Priest* [*Sits down beside him*] From the refuge which is opened to us when we leave this life which is like a house with dark windows .

*Billionaire* Tell me about the house with dark windows

*Priest* From that refuge light could enter at a wider door than .

*Billionaire* Yes, that is it

*Priest* And there is no such thing as too late In one second the infinite treasure may be won

*Billionaire* What treasure?

*Priest* The new Being that waits behind this span of life

*Billionaire* Does it lie in the future?

*Priest* That future is his who knocks with a humble hand

*Billionaire* [*Shaking his head*] The old error remains

*Priest* Safe promises are given us

*Billionaire* Flight into the kingdom of heaven The cross and vinegar are no salvation In the end it is not to be found—in the beginning it is there, your paradise

*Priest* We are dispossessed

*Billionaire* Does that darken recognition?

. I don't want to upset you or knock your tools out of your hand But the deepest truth will never be proclaimed by you or the thousand of you It is found always only by one man alone And it is so enormous that it becomes incapable of all effectiveness

You seek a refuge—I could tell you that you are on the wrong path The goal jumps ahead of you a hundred times over and each time with a blow in your back And your flight towards sanctuary goes ever more wildly forward But you never arrive Not that way . not that way

*Priest* Then tell me this what is it that gives you—I can find no other word for it—your solemn tranquility?

*Billionaire* I have reached the paradise again that lies behind all of us A deed of violence brought me through its gates—one needs that, for the angels on either side bear swords of flame And now I stand amidst the loveliest meadow green And the blue of heaven streams over my head

*Priest* Are you thinking of your pleasant childhood?

*Billionaire* Simple, is it not? "Become like little children " Wisdom is only the matter of a phrase, too

*Priest* Why can we not remain children always?

*Billionaire* That is a riddle you will not solve today or tomorrow either! [*The PRIEST stares out before him*] Do you see this?

*Priest* It is the coral you asked for as your last request

*Billionaire* Do you know how it grows out of the bed of the sea? To the surface of the water—no higher There it stands washed by the tides—moulded by the sea and bound forever to it Fish are little events that go by in tiny tumult Fascinating . .

*Priest* What do you mean?

*Billionaire* Only to open one corner of the case the riddle is enclosed in What would be best? Never to come out into the storm that drives towards the shore and drags us in its wake There turmoil roars and drags us into the frenzy of life We are all driven on . as we are all driven out of our paradise of quiet Bits broken off the dim coral-tree

wounded from the first day with a wound that does not heal, but burns and burns It is the fearful pain goads us on our way . . What is that in your hand? [*He takes the*

PRIEST'S *hand with the black crucifix and lifts it high* ] That only dulls the pain [*He holds the red coral to his breast with both hands* ]  
This delivers from sorrow! [*The high narrow door is opened The BILLIONAIRE stands up* ]

*Priest* I cannot go with you  
[*The BILLIONAIRE goes towards the door, walking steadily* ]

THE END



GAS—PART I

A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

BY GEORG KAISER

*Translated from the German by HERMANN SCHEFFAUER*



## CHARACTERS

THE GENTLEMAN IN WHITE  
THE BILLIONAIRE'S SON  
THE DAUGHTER  
THE OFFICER  
THE ENGINEER  
FIRST GENTLEMAN IN BLACK  
SECOND GENTLEMAN IN BLACK  
THIRD GENTLEMAN IN BLACK  
FOURTH GENTLEMAN IN BLACK  
FIFTH GENTLEMAN IN BLACK  
GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONER  
THE CLERK  
FIRST WORKMAN  
SECOND WORKMAN  
THIRD WORKMAN  
THE GIRL  
THE WOMAN  
THE MOTHER  
THE CAPTAIN  
A Machine-Gun Detachment, Workmen, Work-  
women

*The action takes place in the same country as that of "The Coral,"  
but a generation later*

## GAS—PART I

### ACT ONE

*A vast square room, all in white, the office of the BILLIONAIRE'S SON. The rear wall is composed entirely of glass in large squares. The walls to right and left are covered from floor to ceiling with great charts bearing statistics, scales, and diagrams in black and white. To the left is a spacious desk and an arm-chair of austere design, a second arm-chair at the side. A smaller desk to the right. Visible through the glass wall in a murky violet light, the steep close-throated shapes of great chimney-stacks from which flame and smoke pour in horizontal lines.*

*Faint bursts of music come and go.*

*A young CLERK at the smaller desk to the right.*

*Enter noiselessly the GENTLEMAN IN WHITE, a strange, whimsical, phantom figure, entirely in white, including a chalk-white face. He shuts the door noiselessly, surveys the room, tip-toes towards the CLERK, touches him upon the shoulder.*

*Gentleman in White* Music?

*The Clerk* [turns up a startled face to him]

*Gentleman in White* [listens to sounds from overhead, and nods] Valse

*Clerk* How do you happen—?

*Gentleman in White* Quite casually. A certain noiselessness—achieved by rubber soles. [He seats himself in chair before desk and crosses his legs] The Chief?—busy? Upstairs?

*Clerk* What do you wish?

*Gentleman in White* A dancing party?

*Clerk* [in growing haste and confusion] There's a wedding—overhead.

*Gentleman in White* [with pointing finger] The Chief—or—?

*Clerk* The Daughter—and the Officer.

*Gentleman in White* Then, of course, he can't be seen at present—the Chief?

*Clerk* We have no chief—here—

*Gentleman in White* [switching round] Interesting! Assuming that you are not too deeply engaged in delicate calculations—the wage-schedules there—?

*Clerk* We have no wage-schedules—here!

*Gentleman in White* That piles up the interest. That touches the core of things. [Pointing through the window] This gigantic establishment going full blast—and no chief—no wage-schedules—?

*Clerk* We work—and we share!

*Gentleman in White* [pointing to the wall] The diagrams? [Rising and reading the tables] Three divisions. Up to thirty years, Scale One. Up to forty years, Scale Two. Over forty, Scale Three. A simple bit of arithmetic. Profit-sharing according to age. [To CLERK] An invention of your Chief?—who refuses to be a chief?

*Clerk* Because he does not wish to be richer than others!

*Gentleman in White* Was he ever rich?

*Clerk* He is the son of the Billionaire!

*Gentleman in White* [smiling] So he advanced to the very periphery of wealth and then returned to its centre—to its core—And you work?

*Clerk* Every man works to his utmost!

*Gentleman in White* Because you get your share of the total earnings?

*Clerk* Yes—and that's why we work harder here than anywhere else on earth!

*Gentleman in White* I suppose you produce something worth such an effort?

*Clerk* Gas!

*The Gentleman in White* [blows through his hollowed hand]

*Clerk* [excited] Haven't you heard of the Gas we produce?

*The Gentleman in White* [also shows excitement]

*Clerk* Coal-and-water-power are out of date. This new source of energy drives millions of machines at super-speed. We furnish the power. Our Gas feeds the industry of the entire world!

*Gentleman in White* [at window] Day and night—fire and smoke?

*Clerk* We have attained the acme of our achievement!

*Gentleman in White* [returning] Because poverty is abolished?

*Clerk* Our intensive efforts create—create!

*Gentleman in White* Because profits are shared?

*Clerk* Gas!

*Gentleman in White* And suppose sometime the Gas—should—

*Clerk* The work must go on—not a moment's pause! We are working for ourselves—not for the pockets of others No loafing—no strikes The work goes on without a pause There will always be Gas!

*Gentleman in White* And suppose sometime the Gas should—explode?

*The Clerk* [stares at him]

*Gentleman in White* What then?

*The Clerk* [is speechless]

*The Gentleman in White* [breathes the words directly into his face] The White Horror! [Rising to full height and listening to sounds overhead] Music [Haltng halfway to door] Valse [Trips out, silently]

*Clerk* [in growing consternation, finally seizes telephone, almost screaming] *The Engineer!* [His eyes dart back and forth between the doors to right and left]

[THE ENGINEER enters from right, wearing a frock-coat]

*Engineer* What—

[A WORKMAN in white blouse comes in from the left, greatly excited]

*Clerk* [pointing with outstretched arm at WORKMAN] There—!

*Engineer* [to WORKMAN] Are you looking for me?

*Workman* [surprised] I was just coming to report to you

*Engineer* [to CLERK]. But you had already telephoned me!

*Clerk* Because—

*Engineer* Did you receive a report?

*Clerk* [shakes his head and points to WORKMAN] This man—

*Engineer* Has just come

*Clerk* —was bound to come!

*Engineer* [somehow disquieted] What has happened?

*Workman* The Gas in the sight-tube shows colour

*Engineer* Colour!

*Workman* It is still only a tange.

*Engineer* Growing deeper?

*Workman* Visibly

*Engineer* What colour?

*Workman* A light rose

*Engineer* Are you not mistaken?

*Workman* I have been watching it carefully

*Engineer*. How long?

*Clerk* [impulsively]. Ten minutes?

*Workman* Yes

*Engineer* How do you know that?

*Clerk* Wouldn't it be best to ring up—upstairs?

*Engineer* [telephones] *Engineer* Report from Central Station—sight-tube shows colour I'll inspect personally. [To WORKMAN] Come along [Both go out]

*Clerk* [suddenly throws up his arms, then runs out screaming] We're done for—we're done for [From the right the BILLIONAIRE'S SON—sixty years old—and the OFFICER in red uniform come in]

*Officer* Is there any cause for serious alarm?

*Billionaire's Son* I am waiting for the Engineer's report Nevertheless, I am glad you are both going I wanted to say a word about the fortune which my daughter is bringing you [Takes a note-book out of his writing-table]

*Officer* I thank you

*Billionaire's Son* You need not thank me It is her mother's money It ought to be considerable I have no mind for such things

*Officer* An officer is forced—

*Billionaire's Son* You love each other—I offered no objection

*Officer* I shall guard your daughter, whom you are confiding to my hands, as I would my own honour

*Billionaire's Son* [opening book] Here is the amount of the funds and where they are deposited Select an efficient banker and take his advice That is most necessary

*Officer* [reads, then in amazement] We shall certainly require a banker to manage all this!

*Billionaire's Son* Because the capital is a large one? I did not mean it that way

*Officer* I do not understand

*Billionaire's Son* What you have now you have for the entire future You must not expect anything from me Not now and not later I shall leave nothing My principles are sufficiently well known—they must also be familiar to you

*Officer* It is not likely that we—

*Billionaire's Son* No one can tell As long as money is piled up, money will go, lost Conditions based on money are always uncertain I feel I must tell you this, so that later on I may feel no responsibility. You

have married the daughter of a workman—I am nothing more I will not conceal from you the fact that I would rather that my daughter's mother had not left her a fortune But I exercise authority only in my own province, and I never attempt to force anyone into this Not even my daughter

[THE DAUGHTER, in travelling dress, comes in from the right]

Daughter Why must we hurry off this way?

Officer [kissing her hand] How warm you still are from the dance!

Billionaire's Son I should not like the marriage-festival to end in a discord [They start] The danger can be, no doubt, averted But it demands every possible effort

Daughter [at window] Below—in the works?

Billionaire's Son I should not find time to say good-bye—later on

Daughter Is it so very serious?

Officer Counter measures have been taken

Billionaire's Son [taking DAUGHTER'S hand] Bon voyage Be happy To-day you have laid aside my name That is no loss I am a man of plain tastes I cannot approach the splendour of your new name Must you and all you are be extinguished in me—now that you are going?

[THE DAUGHTER looks at him questioningly]

Officer How can you say that?

Billionaire's Son I cannot follow you in your world—a world of fallacies

Daughter But I shall return

Billionaire's Son It is not likely that I can wait for a real return [Abruptly] I shall now ask the guests to leave [He kisses her forehead] THE DAUGHTER stands deeply moved He clasps the OFFICER'S hand The OFFICER leads the DAUGHTER out]

Billionaire's Son [telephones] Tell the people in the drawing-room that a disturbance at the works necessitates bringing the festivities to a close It is advisable to leave the vicinity as quickly as possible [The music ceases]

[Enter ENGINEER from left A working-coat over his dress suit He is deeply agitated]

Engineer [gasping] Report from Central Station—Gas colours deeper every second In a few minutes—at the same rate of progress—it will be—a deep red!

Billionaire's Son Is anything wrong with the engines?

Engineer All working perfectly!

Billionaire's Son Any trouble with the ingredients?

Engineer All ingredients, all!—tested before mixing!

Billionaire's Son Where does the fault lie?

Engineer [shaking from top to toe] In—the formula!

Billionaire's Son Your formula—does not—work out?

Engineer My formula—does not—work out!

Billionaire's Son Are you sure?

Engineer Yes! Now!

Billionaire's Son Have you found the mistake?

Engineer No!

Billionaire's Son Can't you find it?

Engineer The calculation is—correct!

Billionaire's Son And yet the sight-tubes show colour?

The Engineer [throws himself into chair before desk and jerks his hand across sheet of paper]

Billionaire's Son Have the alarms been set going?

Engineer [without pausing in his work] All the bells are pounding away

Billionaire's Son Is there enough time to clear the works?

Engineer The lorries are whizzing from door to door

Billionaire's Son In good order?

Engineer In perfect order!

Billionaire's Son [in terrible agitation] Will all get out?

Engineer [leaping to his feet, standing erect before him] I have done my duty—the formula is clear—without a flaw!

Billionaire's Son [stunned] You cannot find the error?

Engineer Nobody can find it Nobody! No brain could reckon more carefully I've made the final calculation!

Billionaire's Son And it does not work out?

Engineer It works out—and does not work out We have reached the limit—works out and does not work out Figures fail us—works out—yet does not work out The thing sums itself up, and then turns against us—works out and does not work out!

Billionaire's Son The Gas—?

Engineer It is bleeding in the sight-tube! Flooding past the formula—going red in the sight-glass Floating out of the formula—

taking the bit in its own teeth I have done my duty My head is quite clear The impossible is going to take place—it cannot come—yet it is coming!

*Billionaire's Son* [feeling for a chair] We are helpless—delivered up to——

*Engineer* The Explosion!

[A terrible sibilance tears asunder the silence without A grinding thunder bursts—the smoke-stacks crack and fall. A silence, empty and smokeless, ensues The great glass windows rattle into the room in a cascade of fragments]

*Billionaire's Son* [flattened against the wall—in a toneless voice] The earth swayed——

*Engineer* Pressure of millions of atmospheres——

*Billionaire's Son* All is silent—a grave

*Engineer* Immense radius of devastation——

*Billionaire's Son* Who is still living?

[The door to left is flung open. A WORKMAN—naked—stained by the explosion totters in]

*Workman* Report from Shed Eight—Central—white cat burst—red eyes torn open—yellow mouth gaping—humps up crackling back—grows round—snaps away girders—lifts up roof—bursts—sparks! sparks! [Sitting down in the middle of floor and striking about him] Chase away the cat—Shoo! Shoo!—smash her jaws—Shoo! Shoo!—bury her eyes—they flame—hammer down her back—hammer it down—thousands of fists! It's swelling, swelling—growing fat—fatter—Gas out of every crack—every tube! [Once more half erecting himself] Report from Central—the white cat has—exploded! [He collapses and lies prone]

*Billionaire's Son* [goes to him]

*The Workman* [grotes with his hand]

*Billionaire's Son* [takes his hand]

*Workman* [with a cry] Mother! [Dies]

*Billionaire's Son* [bending low above him] O man! O mankind!

## ACT TWO

*The same room* A green jalouse or blind has been let down over the great window In front of this stands a long draughting-table covered with drawings

*The young CLERK—with hair which has now grown snow-white—at his table, inactive*

*The BILLIONAIRE'S SON is leaning against the draughting-table*

*Billionaire's Son* How long since it happened?

*Clerk* Just seventeen days ago to-day

*Billionaire's Son* [turning and looking at the window] Formerly great sheds stood there and thrust smoke-stacks against the heavens—belching a fiery breath That was what we used to see behind this green shutter—not so?

*Clerk* Everything pulverized to dust—in a few minutes

*Billionaire's Son* Are you sure it did not take place a thousand years ago?

*Clerk* I shall never forget that day!

*Billionaire's Son* Perhaps this day is already too far distant for you?

*The Clerk* [looks at him questioningly]

*Billionaire's Son* That is to say—when you look at your hair?

*Clerk* I was beside myself—it was almost hallucination I felt it in my bones that it was coming I saw Horror—saw it bodily And that was worse—than what really happened! And I grew white before it really happened

*Billionaire's Son* [nodding] The White Horror—this was necessary in order to give us impetus—a powerful impetus—to fling us forward for a thousand years! Seventeen days, you say? Seventeen days full of peace and quiet

*Clerk* [in a matter-of-fact manner] The workmen still persist in their refusal

*Billionaire's Son* And I cannot employ them The works have been levelled to the ground

*Clerk* They will not take up work before—

*Billionaire's Son* Before I give my permission

*Clerk* [nonplussed] Are you postponing the rebuilding?

*Billionaire's Son* [shaking his head] I am not postponing it——

*Clerk* You are always at work upon the drawings

*Billionaire's Son* [bending over the draughting-table] I am measuring—and colouring——

*Clerk* The whole world is in urgent need of Gas—the demand is imperative The supplies will soon be exhausted If the Gas should—come to an end——!

*Billionaire's Son* [quickly erecting himself] Then I hold the fate of the world in my hands.

*Clerk* You must grant the demands of the workmen—or else the most terrible catastrophe of all will come

*Billionaire's Son* [walks towards him and strokes his hair] A catastrophe you call it?—you youthful whitehead? You should have had your warning. It was terrible enough when everything went up in thunder about us here. Do you wish to return to the White Horror? Are your fingers itching to play at the same old game? Can't you be anything but a Clerk?

*Clerk* I have my calling

*Billionaire's Son* Don't you feel the call—for something more important?

*Clerk* I must earn my living

*Billionaire's Son* And what if this particular "must" should be done away with?

*Clerk* I am a Clerk

*Billionaire's Son* From the crown of your head to the sole of your feet?

*Clerk* I—am a Clerk.

*Billionaire's Son* Because you have always been a Clerk?

*Clerk* It is—my calling

*Billionaire's Son* [smiling] Ah, it has buried you deep indeed. The strata of society are carried upon you—layer by layer. Nothing less than an exploding volcano will bring you to the surface—nothing less than this can teach you to rise

[Three WORKMEN enter from the left]

*Billionaire's Son* [addressing them] Have you once more come stamping through the debris? I have not yet been able to send you my reply. The thing is still taking shape—I am up to the ears in sketches and calculations—look here! But I can make you a definite proposal if you will grant me a final time limit. Are you willing?

*First Workman* The excitement—

*Billionaire's Son* I understand. There were many victims—I do not dare to think of how many victims the accident claimed. [Clasping his head with his hands] And yet I must keep them clearly before me. My decision will then be clear. Speak

*First Workman* We are merely making the same demand which we have always made

*Billionaire's Son* I know what it is. I am revolving it in my mind. I am taking it as the basis of my— [Abruptly] I am supposed to send away the Engineer?

*First Workman* There is still time—today

*Billionaire's Son* And to-morrow?

*First Workman* To-morrow we would refuse to take up work for a period of twenty weeks

*Billionaire's Son* Leaving the wreckage lie?

*First Workman* In case of a settlement the works could be set going again—in twenty weeks

*Second Workman* The world's supply of Gas will not last longer than twenty weeks

*Third Workman* There will be a world-wide holiday

*Billionaire's Son* . Why should I let the Engineer go? [The WORKMEN are silent] Where lies his fault? Did the safety appliances fail to work? Even in a slight degree? Were the alarm signals incomplete? In making concessions to you, I must also be just to him. That is no more than right

*Third Workman* The Gas exploded

*Billionaire's Son* Was it his fault? No. The formula was correct. It is still correct

*First Workman* The Explosion came

*Billionaire's Son* According to its own laws. Not his

*Second Workman* He made the formula

*Billionaire's Son* No man could make a safer one!

[The three WORKMEN are silent]

*First Workman* The Engineer must go!

*Second Workman* He must go to-day!

*Third Workman* His going must be announced at once!

*First Workman* We must take this announcement back with us

*Billionaire's Son* Must you have your sacrifice? Is that everything? Do you think that you can thereby silence the dead who call aloud in you? Do you think that you can strangle that which clamours in your blood? Can you hide a field of corpses under new corpses? Are you entangled in this horrible lust of revenge after all the horrors which have been? Is this the fruit of the fiery tree which rained pitch and brimstone upon us?

*First Workman* There is also this—we can no longer be responsible for the attitude of the workers

*Second Workman* There is a fermentation—which is growing

*Third Workman* There will be an outbreak

*Billionaire's Son* [violently] Tell them—all, all of them—that they have ears to hear and a brain to reason with. The thing passed beyond the limits of the human. The brain of the Engineer had calculated everything to

the utmost But beyond this there rule forces which suffer no rule The flaw lies in eternity Impossible to find by mortal means The formula tallies—yet the Gas explodes Can you not understand?

*First Workman* We have our orders

*Billionaire's Son* Will you also assume the responsibility?

*First Workman* For what?

*Billionaire's Son* If I grant your demand—if I let the Engineer go—and you return to work——

*First Workman* We'll pledge ourselves to that

*Billionaire's Son* And you will make Gas?

*Second and Third Workman* Gas!

*Billionaire's Son* The formula will be used?

*First Workman* [hesitating] If it is correct ——

*Billionaire's Son* Incontrovertibly so!

*Second Workman* It is correct and ——

*Billionaire's Son* And the Gas exploded

[*The three WORKMEN are silent*]

*Billionaire's Son* And, therefore, must not the Engineer remain?

[*The three WORKMEN stare in front of them*]

*Billionaire's Son* Is not my refusal a safeguard against horror? Am I not keeping a door shut, a door behind which hell is smouldering? A door which leaves no way open to life? It is like a burning cul-de-sac Who would go into a cul-de-sac? and lose sight of his goal? Who would be such a fool as to batter his forehead against the last wall and say I have reached the end He has reached the end, it is true, but this end is Annihilation Turn back! turn back! you have heard the warning thundered from the heavens—it rent the air and came crashing down upon us Turn back! turn back!

*First Workman* [erecting himself] We must work!

*Second Workman* And our work is here!

*Third Workman* We are workers!

*Billionaire's Son* You are workers—indefatigably so Caught up in the maelstrom of the ultimate effort Immeasurably enthusiastic over all this [*Pointing to the charts and tables*] There we have the mad chase—all the diagrams Your work—and your wages in the hollow of your hands That cheers you up—that spurs you on beyond even profit—that makes you work for work's sake. It is like an outbreak of fever, and it

clouds the senses Work—work—a wedge that is driven forward and which bores because it bores To what end? I bore because I bore—I was a borer—I am a borer—and I remain a borer! Doesn't this make you shiver? Shiver at thought of the mutilation you inflict upon yourselves? You living, sentient, wonderful beings—you manifold ones—you men!

*First Workman* We must take back a clear reply

*Billionaire's Son* I have given you one But you do not yet understand And it is also new to me—to me who feel my way so slowly and carefully.

*Second Workman* Is the Engineer going?

*Billionaire's Son* He is going

*Third Workman* To-day?

*Billionaire's Son* He is not going!

*First Workman* We do not understand

*Billionaire's Son* He goes—and he remains—the Engineer must become a matter of utter indifference to us

*Second Workman* What does this mean?

*Billionaire's Son* That is still a small and precious secret of mine I shall reveal it to you—later on Look at those plans—I did not finish them—because the help I need is not yet at hand—and this help I can obtain only from the man who is and is not your enemy

*First Workman* May we give a definite answer to our fellows out there?

*Billionaire's Son* Whatever you please I will carry out everything—and more than you can promise your fellows out there So now you may depart—in contentment

[*The three WORKMEN go out BILLIONAIRE'S SON bends over the drawings on the draughting-table*]

*Clerk* [leaping up from his chair, hurriedly] I—am going!

*Billionaire's Son* [rises to an erect position]

*Clerk* I am—out of work

*Billionaire's Son* For the present

*Clerk* But there will be no change!

*Billionaire's Son* Visions again? But of a somewhat darker shade this time? No mirage with a green oasis rising from the desert? Prophecy, my young prophetic friend You have a most peculiar gift I am curious to hear your prophecies

*Clerk* I—there is nothing more to write about

*Billionaire's Son* Can nothing tempt you?

Are you not eager for health? Would you not like to work with both hands, instead of this right hand of yours which does nothing but write? you with the lamed left?

*Clerk* I—am going!

*Billionaire's Son* Whither?

*Clerk* To the others!

*Billionaire's Son* Gather together and growl before the gates. The wheels are still spinning in your breasts—the urge is still too great. It will require time before inertia can set in. And then I'll admit you all.

[*CLERK goes out to the right* BILLIONAIRE'S SON *once more at the draughting-table* Enter ENGINEER *from the left*]

*Billionaire's Son* [looks up and regards him quizzically] No damage? in body or clothes?

[ENGINEER looks at him questioningly]

*Billionaire's Son* Are you not the scape-goat who is to be impaled on his own horns? Haven't they beaten you yet?

*Engineer* I heard them hissing.

*Billionaire's Son* That was only the signal for the bleeding sacrifice—the slaughter takes place to-morrow.

*Engineer* I know that I am free of carelessness—or incapacity.

*Billionaire's Son* But they are after your scalp.

*Engineer* These people ought to be shown —

*Billionaire's Son* That a proof is clear and yet is not clear.

*Engineer* I cannot leave—it would be like a confession of guilt —

*Billionaire's Son* Could I not discharge you?

*Engineer* No! For you would then brand me with the mark—which makes me an outcast.

*Billionaire's Son* One must suffer for many.

*Engineer* [excitedly] Yes—if one would serve the advantage of the many. But where is the advantage here? Take this man or that man and put him in my place—the formula remains valid—must remain so. He must reckon with human reason, and human reason reckons only in this way. Or you must make Gas by means of a weaker formula.

*Billionaire's Son* Do you believe in a weaker formula?

*Engineer* All the machinery of the world would have to be rebuilt.

*Billionaire's Son* That would not prevent its coming to pass.

*Engineer* Facing the necessity of an inferior motive power —

*Billionaire's Son* The machines might be stopped—but not men.

*Engineer* But after they have learned the danger?

*Billionaire's Son* And no matter if they were blown up ten times, they would establish themselves in the burning zone for the eleventh time.

*Engineer* An explosion such as this —

*Billionaire's Son* Will bring them to their senses, you think? Has it had any influence upon the fever which makes them rave? They are already clamouring out there. Hand the Engineer over to us—and then we'll speed on again—out of one explosion into another explosion.

*Engineer* And, therefore, my leaving is senseless.

*Billionaire's Son* [smiling craftily] It would be an unparalleled stupidity! They would merely come jumping into the witches' cauldron once more—the rogues. The gates must be blocked, and I intend to use you for that purpose. I am powerful, now that I am going to keep you by me.

*Engineer* [stroking his forehead] But, what are you going —

*Billionaire's Son* Come here. [He takes him to the draughting-table.] Do you see this? Sketches—rough sketches. The first draft of a new project. Merely hints of something big, something momentous—the first sketches.

*Engineer* What is that?

*Billionaire's Son* Don't you recognize the land?

*Engineer* The plant?

*Billionaire's Son* Has been levelled to the ground.

*Engineer* Are these the new sheds?

*Billionaire's Son* What! of such ridiculous dimensions!

*Engineer* Are these yards?

*Billionaire's Son* The coloured circles?

*Engineer* Are these railway tracks?

*Billionaire's Son* These green lines? [The ENGINEER stares at the plans.] Can't you guess? Have you no suspicions? You sly duck! You feeder on figures! Are you puzzled by this many-coloured riddle? You are blind—colour-blind from the eternal monotony of your doings—up to this very day. Now



a new day is born to greet you, and smiles upon you like springtime Open your eyes and let them sweep over this domain The vari-coloured earth is all about you [*pointing to the plans*] The green lines—streets bordered by trees The red, the yellow, the blue circles—open spaces full of flowering plants, sprouting from smooth lawns The squares—houses, human dwellings with a small holding of land—shelters Mighty streets go forth here—penetrating, conquering other domains, great roads trodden by pilgrims, our pilgrims, who shall preach simplicity—to us—to all! [*His gestures are grandiose*]

*Engineer* [*puzzled*] Do you intend to rebuild the plant—somewhere? —

*Billionaire's Son* It buried itself It reached its apex and then collapsed And that is why we are discharged—you and I and all the others—discharged with clear consciences We went our way to the very end without fear—and now we turn aside It is no more than our right—our honest right

*Engineer* The reconstruction—is doubtful?

*Billionaire's Son* [*patting the plans with his hand*] The decision is here and it is against reconstruction

*Engineer* And the Gas—which can be made only here?

*Billionaire's Son* The Gas exploded

*Engineer* The workmen?

*Billionaire's Son* Homesteaders—each on his patch of green

*Engineer* That—is—impossible!

*Billionaire's Son* Do you object to my plans? I told you that they were incomplete I have counted upon you to help me carry them out I am counting greatly upon your help There is no other man so capable of carrying out a big project as yourself I have the deepest confidence in you Shall we proceed to work? [*He draws up a stool to the draughting-table and sits down*]

*Engineer* [*making a few steps backward*] But I am an Engineer!

*Billionaire's Son* You will find excellent use for your capacities here

*Engineer* That is not—my branch

*Billionaire's Son* All branches are united in this

*Engineer* I cannot undertake such a task

*Billionaire's Son* Is it too difficult for you?

*Engineer* Too—pitiful!

*Billionaire's Son* [*rising*] That do you say? You think this trivial—you with your genius

for figures! Are you the slave of your calculations? Are you fettered to those grids which you constructed? Have you delivered up your arms and legs, your blood and your senses to this frame which you devised? Are you a diagram covered with a skin? [*He reaches out for him*] Where are you? Your human warmth? your beating pulse? your sense of shame?

*Engineer* If I cannot be occupied—in my own line —

*Billionaire's Son* Your hands should muzzle your mouth—for it is talking murder.

*Engineer.* Then I must ask for my dismissal

*Billionaire's Son* [*supporting himself against the table*] No! that will bring back the others The road would be clear and they would come storming back, and build up their hell again—and the fever will continue to rage Help me! stay by me! Work here with me—here where I am working

*Engineer.* I am dismissed!

[*BILLIONAIRE'S SON regards him speechlessly* *ENGINEER goes out to the right*]

*Billionaire's Son* [*strong at last*] Then I must force, must force you—every one of you!

### ACT THREE

*An oval room There is a high wainscot of white-enamelled wood In this there are two invisible doors, two at the rear—one to the left In the centre there is a small round table covered with a green cloth This is surrounded by six chairs, close together*

*The OFFICER enters from the left—in a military cape He can scarcely control his emotion He looks for the doors, taps parts of the wainscot*

*The BILLIONAIRE'S SON enters from the left, to the rear*

*Officer* [*turning swiftly about and advancing*] Am I disturbing you?

*Billionaire's Son* [*astonished*] Have you two come back?

*Officer* No, I've come back alone

*Billionaire's Son* Where is your wife?

*Officer* She—was not able to accompany me

*Billionaire's Son* Is she ill—my daughter?

*Officer* She—does not know I've come here!

*Billionaire's Son* [*nodding*] The looks of

things here are certainly far from edifying. The paternal foundation is now only a mass of ruins. Would you like to have a look around?

*Officer [hastily]* The catastrophe must have been terrible. I suppose the rebuilding is going ahead at a good pace?

*Billionaire's Son* Have you noticed anything of the sort going on?

*Officer* It is natural—and you must be immensely busy.

*Billionaire's Son [shaking his head]* My time —

*Officer* You are more than busy. The work is more than you can manage. [*Pointing to the table*] There is going to be a meeting. I am sorry to be forced to disturb you. [*Suddenly, almost abruptly*] But I must ask you to give me a little of your time—now!

*Billionaire's Son* All things are equally important to me.

*Officer* I thank you for your willingness to hear me. The matter concerns me—concerns my salvation, my rescue —

*Billionaire's Son* Salvation? rescue? from what?

*Officer* From being cashiered from the regiment—in disgrace.

*Billionaire's Son* Why?

*Officer* I've contracted debts—at cards—debts of honour. And I must pay them by to-morrow noon.

*Billionaire's Son* Can't you pay them?

*Officer* No!

*Billionaire's Son* If it is necessary—draw upon your fortune—your wife's dowry.

*Officer* That—no longer exists.

*Billionaire's Son* What has become of it?

*Officer [excitedly]* I played and I lost. I tried to cover the losses and began to speculate. The speculations were a failure and involved great losses. I increased my stakes at the table beyond my means—and if I cannot pay—I—must—blow—out—my brains!

*Billionaire's Son [after a pause]* And so your final way leads you to me?

*Officer* It cost me a great effort to come here—to you—who have confided in me, and whom I have deceived. But despair drives me to you. I deserve your reproaches—all the blame you can pour upon me is just blame. I have nothing to say in my defence.

*Billionaire's Son* I do not reproach you.

*Officer [reaching for his hand]* I am shamed by your goodness—your forgiveness. I swear that—once I get out of this safely—I —

*Billionaire's Son* I do not wish you to swear —

*Officer* Then I will pledge myself —

*Billionaire's Son* Because I cannot do you a service —

*Officer [stares at him]* Will you not —

*Billionaire's Son* I cannot help—even though I would. I told you at the time that you were marrying the daughter of a workman. I am that workman. I hid nothing from you. I gave you a clear idea of everything.

*Officer* Means are everywhere at your disposal!

*Billionaire's Son* No.

*Officer* A word from you—and every bank is at your service.

*Billionaire's Son* No longer to-day.

*Officer* The great plant—surely that will be working again in a few weeks —

*Billionaire's Son* It will be standing still!

*Officer* Still —?

*Billionaire's Son* Yes, I have come to other conclusions. Will you help me? I need help—much help. The great stronghold of error cannot be toppled over by one man alone—a thousand hands must help to shake it.

*Officer [bewildered]* You will not help —?

*Billionaire's Son* I am myself in need. A good wind brings you hither. You are a debtor—as I am a debtor. And we are both guiltless. But now lips are loosened and accusations pour forth—accusations against all of us.

*Officer [clutching his head with his hands]* I—can—not—think —

*Billionaire's Son* Take off that gaudy uniform and put aside your sword. You are a good man—for did not my daughter become your wife? You are sound at heart. Whence came this shadow? Whence all that hides and covers up your real self? How did you succumb to this temptation for show?

*Officer* What!—you expect me to give up my career as an officer —?

*Billionaire's Son* Confess your fault—and prove your guiltlessness. See that you win the eyes and ears of men—see that your voice carries farther and farther. I myself cannot realise myself—I remain disguised for life in this coat. And so the currents of the great forces in me are turned awry—turned into a canal full of deeds undone—because one deed still threatens—a deed which will bring annihilation in its train. I would save those who

would bring about something which can only bring about ruin

*Officer* [suppressing a groan] Can—you help me?

*Billionaire's Son* Yes!

*Officer* Then give me ——!

*Billionaire's Son* That which you give me I could never pay for

*Officer* My period of grace is expiring

*Billionaire's Son* No, it will go on for ever.

*Officer* Money!

*Billionaire's Son* Ought I to cheat you with money—cheat you out of your real self?

*Officer* [in desperation] I must leave the Service—I shall be struck off the Rolls—I—

*Billionaire's Son* [leading him towards the door with his arm about his shoulder] Yes, no doubt there will be a sensation, should I abandon you. You, my son-in-law, and I with the most abundant means at my disposal And yet I did nothing, they will say That will arouse their attention—they will become most attentive listeners I need good listeners and you will help me to get them That will be your service And praise shall be ours—even without my recognition But my recognition will not fail

[The OFFICER goes out]

[BILLIONAIRE'S SON steps up to the table, passes his hand over the green cloth—nods—and then goes out behind to the left]

[The FIRST GENTLEMAN IN BLACK enters from the left A massive head with short bristles of gray hair rises above the closely-buttoned black frock-coat]

[The SECOND GENTLEMAN IN BLACK enters—he is bald—and his costume, like that of all following him, resembles that of the FIRST]

*Second Gentleman in Black* How are things at your place?

*First Gentleman in Black* Not a finger moving

*Second Gentleman in Black* The same thing at my place

[Enter THIRD GENTLEMAN IN BLACK—with blonde pointed beard]

*Third Gentleman in Black* [to the FIRST] How are things at your place?

*First Gentleman in Black* Not a finger moving

*Third Gentleman in Black* [to SECOND] And with you?

[SECOND GENTLEMAN IN BLACK shakes his head]

*Third Gentleman in Black* The same with me

[The FOURTH and the FIFTH GENTLEMAN IN BLACK enter—two brothers closely resembling each other, about thirty]

*Fourth Gentleman in Black* [to the FIRST] How are things at your place?

*Fifth Gentleman in Black* [to SECOND] How are things with you?

*Third Gentleman in Black* [to both] How are things with you?

*Fourth and Fifth Gentlemen in Black* Not a finger moving!

*First Gentleman in Black* The same with us

*Second Gentleman in Black* This is the most tremendous stoppage of work I have ever experienced

*Fifth Gentleman in Black* And what is the cause?

*Third Gentleman in Black* Our workmen are striking in sympathy with these men here

*Fifth Gentleman in Black* Why are they striking?

*Second Gentleman in Black* Because the Engineer has not been discharged

*Fifth Gentleman in Black* Why is he kept on?

*Second Gentleman in Black* Yes, why?

*Fourth Gentleman in Black* Because of a mere whim!

*Third Gentleman in Black* Just so!

*First Gentleman in Black* There may be another reason A reason based on principle They demand the dismissal of the Engineer—that gives them something to fight about—furnishes a difficulty—a stumbling-block If the workers make demands upon us—we must oppose these demands—unconditionally That has been the case here—and, therefore, the Engineer keeps his post!

*Third Gentleman in Black* But you forget that he is not one of us

*Fourth Gentleman in Black* It is another whim—of our friends—just like the first

*Second Gentleman in Black* And just as dangerous as the other You will see!

*Second Gentleman in Black* It is to be hoped that it is not more dangerous!

*Third Gentleman in Black* I am of the opinion it could not be worse

*Second Gentleman in Black* This one affair causes us enough trouble!

*Fourth Gentleman in Black* The whole body of workers has its eyes on these works!

*Fifth Gentleman in Black* This sharing of profits with everybody causes unrest in all the other syndicates

*Second Gentleman in Black* An ulcer which ought to be burnt out!

*Third Gentleman in Black* With fire and brimstone!

*First Gentleman in Black* But you must not overlook the results which have been attained on the basis of this method. The sharing of profits has brought about the highest intensification of production, and this has brought about the most powerful of all products—Gas!

*Second Gentleman in Black* Yes—Gas!

*Third Gentleman in Black* Gas!

*Fifth Gentleman in Black* At any rate we need Gas

*Fourth Gentleman in Black* Under all circumstances

*Third Gentleman in Black* We must present our demand the dismissal of the Engineer

*Second Gentleman in Black* Quite independently of the workmen!

*Fifth Gentleman in Black* Quite independently of the workmen

*Fourth Gentleman in Black* That saves our faces!

*Third Gentleman in Black* Have you got the order of business?

*Fourth Gentleman in Black* [at the table] Nothing on hand here

*First Gentleman in Black* We have only this point to consider Are we of one mind?

[The other GENTLEMEN IN BLACK shake his hand in agreement]

[Enter the SON OF THE BILLIONAIRE from the left to the rear He points to the chairs, upon which the GENTLEMEN IN BLACK quickly seat themselves]

The SON OF THE BILLIONAIRE seats himself last, between the FOURTH and FIFTH GENTLEMEN IN BLACK]

*Fifth Gentleman in Black* Who will take down the minutes?

*Billionaire's Son* No, no, let there be no minutes

*Third Gentleman in Black* A meeting and no minutes!

*Billionaire's Son* Yes, yes, we'll have an open discussion

*First Gentleman in Black* Considering the importance of the matter I hold it as abso-

lutely necessary that—in all cases our independence of a similar demand by the Workmen be —

*Second Gentleman in Black* I move that the minutes of the meeting be published!

*Third Gentleman in Black* Let us vote upon that

*First Gentleman in Black* Those who are for —

[The GENTLEMEN IN BLACK each fling up an arm with a vigorous gesture]

*Billionaire's Son* [forcing down the arms of the FOURTH and FIFTH GENTLEMEN IN BLACK] Not all against one—that would make me too powerful That would be coercing you—and I wish only to persuade you

*First Gentleman in Black* If our negotiations —

*Billionaire's Son* Do you wish to negotiate with me? Are you the workmen? Are you not the masters? the employers?

*Third Gentleman in Black* You have invited us without drawing up the order of business for the day We conclude from this that you wish us to draw up this order ourselves That, surely, is a just conclusion We have agreed and are unanimous upon one point

*Second Gentleman in Black* I think the discussion will be brief, and that we had better return to our own plants

*Fourth Gentleman in Black* It is high time that we begin work once more

*Fifth Gentleman in Black* The first night-shift will begin work this evening

*Third Gentleman in Black* There are losses which can never be made good

*Billionaire's Son* Losses? You have had losses? What have you lost?

*The Gentlemen in Black* [together] No work is going on—the plants are lying still—the workmen are on strike!

*Billionaire's Son* [lifting up a hand] I know, they are holding funeral exercises Surely they have good reason Were not thousands—burnt?

*First Gentleman in Black* The strike is quite a different motive

*Billionaire's Son* No, no! You must not listen to their speeches These are senseless What would you say when I tell you that they demand the dismissal of the Engineer? Isn't that a sign of their muddled minds? No, they do not know out there what they are doing

[THE GENTLEMEN IN BLACK look at him in perplexity]

*Billionaire's Son* Is the Engineer guilty, and must he do penance by resigning? Was his formula bad? It stood the test before—and it stands the test now Upon what pretext could I send him away?

*Second Gentleman in Black* [nodding] The formula has been tested —

*Third Gentleman in Black* [also nodding] Its validity has been proved —

*Fourth Gentleman in Black* [also nodding] It is the formula —

*Fifth Gentleman in Black* [also nodding] For Gas!

*Billionaire's Son* Do you really realise this?

*First Gentleman in Black* And for that reason it may be applied by any Engineer

*Second Gentleman in Black* This or that one

*Fourth Gentleman in Black* The Engineer is a mere side-issue

*Fifth Gentleman in Black* A new Engineer—and the same old formula!

*Third Gentleman in Black* And thereby the strike comes to an end

*First Gentleman in Black* We are assembled here to present our demands—the dismissal of the Engineer!

*Billionaire's Son* [staring] —Have you forgotten—are you still deaf—is the thunder and the crashing no longer rolling in your ears—are you no longer shaken upon your seats—are you paralyzed?

*Second Gentleman in Black* The catastrophe is a dark page —

*Fourth Gentleman in Black* We book it to profit and loss —

*Fifth Gentleman in Black* And turn over a new leaf!

*Billionaire's Son* The same formula!

*First Gentleman in Black* We hope —

*Second Gentleman in Black* Naturally!

*Billionaire's Son* The same formula —?

*Third Gentleman in Black* Perhaps there will be a longer interval between the —

*Fourth Gentleman in Black* One must gain experience!

*Billionaire's Son* Twice—thrice —?

*Fifth Gentleman in Black* We shall know when to expect the next —

*Second Gentleman in Black* It is not likely that we shall live to see it

*Billionaire's Son* I am to let them in — surrender —?

*First Gentleman in Black* After all, the industry of the entire world cannot be permitted to stand still

*Third Gentleman in Black* It is entirely dependent upon Gas!

*Billionaire's Son* Is it that? Am I the source of energy which sets all this in motion? Is my power as vast as that?

[THE GENTLEMEN IN BLACK regard him in amazement]

*Billionaire's Son* My voice is mighty—mightier than horror and joy! Does the choice between being and non-being depend upon my word? Does the yes or the no which my lips may speak determine Life—or Annihilation—? [Lifting his hands] I say—no!—no!—no!—A human being decides—as a human being only can decide, no!—no!—no!

[THE GENTLEMEN IN BLACK look at one another]

*Fourth Gentleman in Black* That —

*Fifth Gentleman in Black* —is —

*Third Gentleman in Black* —really —

*Second Gentleman in Black* What—is—the —

*Billionaire's Son* The wreckage lies there—and above the wreckage there is new soil—layer upon layer—the growth of the earth in a new garment—the eternal law of Becoming

*First Gentleman in Black* What does this mean?

*Billionaire's Son* Never again shall smokestacks belch here! Never again shall machines pound and hammer Never again shall the cry of the doomed be mingled with the—unavoidable—Explosion

*Second Gentleman in Black* The plant —

*Third Gentleman in Black* The reconstruction —

*First Gentleman in Black* Gas?

*Billionaire's Son* No reconstruction!—no plant!—no Gas! I will not take the responsibility upon myself—no man can take it upon himself!

*First Gentleman in Black* We are —

*Third Gentleman in Black* —to do without —

*Fifth Gentleman in Black* —Gas?

*Billionaire's Son* Without human sacrifices!

*Second Gentleman in Black* We have established everything upon a basis —

*The Other Gentleman in Black* — of Gas!

*Billionaire's Son* Invent a better Gas—or make shift with an inferior one!

*First Gentleman in Black* This is monstrous We unqualifiedly reject all such imputations What does it mean?—nothing less than a transformation of our entire plants—

*Fourth Gentleman in Black* The costs would be ruinous!

*Third Gentleman in Black* It is not a matter of costs—even if these should bankrupt some of us What I ask is this shall the production of the world be reduced?

*Fifth Gentleman in Black* And that is why you must produce Gas It is your duty Now, if we had not had your Gas —

*Second Gentleman in Black* You have brought about the highest development of modern mechanics And now you must continue to supply Gas!

*First Gentleman in Black* By means of your advanced and fruitful methods which give your workmen a share in the profits, you have achieved this great finality—Gas And that is why we tolerated this method—and now we demand Gas!

*Billionaire's Son* The method is indeed fruitful—as I have discovered But I have merely gone these ways a little sooner than yourselves Sometime or other you must all follow—the wages of all to be shared by all

*Fifth Gentleman in Black* This formula should not have been invented—if there was any likelihood that the making of Gas was to be suspended sometime or other!

*Billionaire's Son* The invention was necessary—for the fever for work possessed the world It raged blindly, and flooded all the frontiers of life

*First Gentleman in Black* A reduction of the speed to which we have been accustomed could not be enforced

*Billionaire's Son* No, I do not counsel a return to a feebler, slower movement We must go on—leaving only the finished, perfect thing behind us—or we should be unworthy of our task We must not succumb to cowardice We are men—human beings imbued with a mighty courage Have we not once more shown this courage? Did we not bravely exhaust every possibility?—It was only after we saw dead men by the thousands lying about us, that we struck out for new fields Have we not once more tested the elements of our power and driven it to extremes merely to know how much power we enjoyed—to fetter the whole—to fetter mankind? Surely our pilgrimage goes towards mankind—epoch

upon epoch—one epoch closes to-day so that the other may open—perhaps the last of all

*Second Gentleman in Black* Do you really intend to stop all production?

*Billionaire's Son* Man is the measure for me—and the needs that uphold him

*Third Gentleman in Black* We have other needs.

*Billionaire's Son* As long as we exhaust man in other ways

*Fourth Gentleman in Black* Do you wish to gull us?

*Fifth Gentleman in Black* With pamphlets?

*Billionaire's Son* I will set an example—establish it on my own land—there will be small domains for all of us in the midst of green promenades

*First Gentleman in Black* What! you are going to cut up the most valuable tract of land in the world—for such a purpose!

*Billionaire's Son* The purpose—is Man!

*Third Gentleman in Black* You must have command of great means, for the world takes account only of—money

*Billionaire's Son* Our former profits will suffice for such a period as will be necessary before our new enterprise can take root and grow

*Fourth Gentleman in Black* You would have to wait long before you found any imitators

*Billionaire's Son* And what if there should be no Gas for you?

[The GENTLEMEN IN BLACK are silent]

*Billionaire's Son* I could force you—as you see—but I do not wish to force you It would offend you—and I have need of your help Here we are—six of us seated about this table—let us say the six of us get up and go forth, and our voices become a sextuple thunder which all men must hear The dumbest, deafest ear would hear our message, under this sixfold pressure You are the great ones of the earth—Labour's Great Gentlemen in Black—arise and come forth and we shall proclaim that the fulness of time has fulfilled itself—and tell it again and again to them who will not understand, because the whirlwind which shook them until yesterday is still in their blood Arise—go forth!!

*First Gentleman in Black* [after a pause, during which he looks about the table, exchanging glances] Are we unanimous? [The GENTLEMEN IN BLACK fling up their right hands] We will set a time-limit—until this evening If



we are not informed by then that the Engineer has been dismissed, we shall apply to the Government We bid you good-day

[*The GENTLEMEN IN BLACK go out*]

*Billionaire's Son* [*seated at the table, rubbing his hand slowly across the green cloth, murmuring*] No — no — no — no — no —!

[*Enter the OFFICER in extreme perturbation—from the left*]

*Officer* [*unbuckling his sword and about to lay it on the table But he halts, and feverishly buckles the sword on again*] I — cannot — do — it — I — cannot! [*He draws a revolver, places it against his breast, stalks slowly out, step by step As the door closes, a shot is heard*]

*Billionaire's Son* [*rising, staring towards the door*] The world is out of joint—let others force it back again!

#### ACT FOUR

A great circular hall of concrete, the upper part vague and nebulous From the cupola of this hall a cone of light from a hidden arc lamp falls through dusk and dust, a mysterious illumination

In the centre, directly under this lamp, there is a steep, small, pulpit-like platform of iron, with two winding stairs

Workmen are assembled, there are many women Stillness reigns The Speakers in alternation appear suddenly upon the platform, almost as from a trapdoor

*Voices* [*rapidly swelling*] Who?

*Girl* [*with upraised arms*] I! [*Stillness*]

*Girl* I'll tell you of my brother!—I no longer knew I had a brother Someone left the house in the morning and came home at night—and slept Or he left the house at night and came back in the morning—and slept One of his hands was large—the other small The large hand never slept It kept making the same movement—day and night This hand ate up his body and sucked up all his strength This hand grew to be the whole man!—What was left of my brother? My brother who used to play beside me—who made sand-castles with his two hands?—He plunged into work And this work needed only one hand—one hand that lifted and depressed the lever—minute after minute—up and down, to the very second! He never missed a stroke—the lever was always true—

always exact And he stood in front of it and served it like a dead man. He never made a mistake—never missed a count His hand obeyed his head and his head belonged to his hand!—And that was all that was left of my brother!—Was this really all that was left?—Then one day at noon—It came! Rivers of fire shot out of every crack and cranny! And the explosion ate up the hand of my brother. And so my brother gave up his all!—Is that too little?—Did my brother dicker about the price when they hired his hand to lift that lever? Did he not suppress all that had made him my brother—and turned him into a mere hand?—And did he not at last pay for his hand too?—Is the pay too little—to ask for the Engineer?—My brother is my voice—do not work before the Engineer is forced to leave!—Do not work—you hear my brother's voice! [*Bending over towards them*]

*Girl* [*crowding up from below*] And it is my brother's voice!

[*The GIRL descends into the Crowd Stillness*]

*Voices* [*swelling forth anew*] Who?

[*A MOTHER stands on the platform*]

*Mother* I! [*Stillness*]

*Mother* A Mother's son was ground to pieces by the Explosion! What is a Son? What was it the fire killed? My son?—I did not know my son any more—for I had buried him long ago—the first morning that he went to the works—Are two eyes that had a fixed stare from looking at the sight-tube—are they a son?—Where was my child—that I had born with a mouth to laugh—with limbs to play? My child—that threw its arms about my neck and kissed me from behind? My child?—I am a Mother, and know that what is born in pain is lost in sorrow I am a Mother—I do not groan over this I stifle the cry on my lips—I choke it down I am a Mother—I do not strike—I do not accuse—not I—it is my child that calls—here! I gave it birth—and now it comes back into my womb—dead!—from Mother to Mother! I have my son again! I feel his throbbing in my blood! I feel him tearing at my tongue—I feel him crying, crying Mother! Where have you been so long? Mother! you were not by me—Mother! you left me alone so soon—Mother! you did not smash the sight-tube—and it was no longer than a finger and as thin as a fly's wing—Why did he not crush it himself?—one touch had done it—

Why was his will so weak—and all his strength gone into his staring eyes? Why did the flames put out his eyes? Why? Why? Must he do everything—and demand nothing? What does it all mean compared to his loss? Here, look! a Mother—and there, look! the Engineer!

[WOMEN crowd closely about the foot of the platform]

Women It is our son!

Mother Mothers and Mothers and Mothers you!—sons cry out in you—do not strangle their cries, stay away from the works—stay away from the works—there is the Engineer

Women Stay away from the works!

[MOTHER descends from the platform and mingles with the WOMEN]

[Stillness]

Voices [loudly] Who?

Woman [upon the platform] II

[Stillness]

Woman We had our wedding—one day A piano played—it was in the afternoon. Everybody danced about the rooms A whole day was ours—morning—noon—and night My man, my fine big man, was with me one whole day One day from morning till night His life lasted a whole day!—Is that too much? Because a day has morning—and noon—and evening? And the night? Is that too long for a man's life?—It is wonderfully long—twenty-four hours—and a wedding! A wedding and twenty-four hours—and a piano—and dancing—don't these make up a life? What does a man expect? To live *two* whole days? What a time!—an eternity! The sun would grow tired of shining upon him! We only get a wedding once—but the iron car rolls on for ever Forwards and backwards—backwards—and forwards—and the man goes with it—always with it—because the man is part of the foot Only his foot is important—his foot operates the block-switch—making the car go and halt—and the foot works, works almost without the man that travels with it If only the foot were not so closely tied to the man! The man would have a chance to live—but his foot pins him to the car which rolls back and rolls forward—day after day—with the man fastened by the foot But then the Explosion came! Why was my husband burned alive? Why the whole man? And not only the foot which was the most important part of my man? Why must my man be burnt, body and limbs, because of a foot?—

Because foot and body and limbs were all part of him, because the foot will not work without the man The foot cannot work alone—it needs my man—Is this plant like my man—who lived only one day—his wedding day—and died a whole life long?—Are not old worn-out pieces replaced with new?—and the works go on as before?—Is not every man a mere part, interchangeable with other parts—and the works go on?—Do not fight for the man at the lever—do not fight for the man at the sight-tube—do not fight for the man on the iron car—the Engineer blocks the way—the Engineer blocks the way!

Women [about the platform] Not for our men!

Girls Not for our brothers!

Mothers Not for our sons!

[The WOMAN leaves the platform The WORKMAN appears on the platform]

Workman Girls—I am your brother I have sworn it—and I am your brother I have sworn—and I am burned as he was burnt I am lying under the ashes and dust—until you send me back to the lever—in place of your brother—who was blown up—Here is his hand—broad and stiff, for gripping a jerking lever—This hand has had its earnings—they lay in the hollow of it—and this hand carried them home And this hand never counted the wages—there they lay in the drawer—and filled the boxes—and became worthless What can a hand buy—now that this hand has lost its motive power—your brother? What can a hand wish? desire? A single hand—and all the savings in the box!—That hand has been paid for—but not your brother!—He has been burnt alive—and has, therefore, become alive—and now he is crying for his wages—give us the Engineer—give us the Engineer!

Workmen [around the platform] We are your brothers!

[The WORKMAN descends among them]

Workman [already standing on the platform] Mother—I am your son!—he has grown alive again—for the sake of his eyes—those eyes that stared so because of the sight-tube—he has grown alive again Your son lives again—in me—breathing and speaking! Mother—I sacrificed myself for a sight-tube as long as a finger—Mother—I gave myself for the sake of the sight-tube—Mother—I died all over my whole body—and all that remained alive in me were my two eyes! I poured my wages



upon the table before you—you did not catch the coin in your apron—it rolled upon the floor—Mother—you no longer bend down to pick it up! Do not pick it up—do not pile it into stacks—you cannot build a house for your son with such columns! He lives in a glass capsule, narrow and poisonous—in the sight-tube—Read the tables in the office and see if you can find the price of a Mother—for my blood and the blood of my Mother—for it was blood that these eyes drank at the sight-tube. Count up your earnings, the premiums, the profits we share—are they enough to pay for a Mother and a Mother's son? The eyes fixed upon the sight-tube brought their profit—but the son came out of it with empty hands. Ought he not charge Heaven and Earth with this great debt? Is he not willing to accept a mere trifle in payment for this debt? What is this worth in comparison with his sacrifice? The Engineer? Only the Engineer! and my eyes look past the Mother and stare at the sight-tube—only the Engineer—only the Engineer!

*Workman [below the platform] I am a son!*

*[WORKMAN on platform descends among them]*

*Workman [now on platform] Woman—your wedding-day will come once more! That day—with its morning, its noon and its evening will be yours once more! It will be the day—and all the other days that follow it will not seem like days at all Your husband will go rolling back and forth again on the iron car—forwards and backwards—a man attached to a foot that operates a switch—Why don't you laugh—you whose whole life is crammed into a single day!—a man and a woman with a whole day between them—is it not a waste of time while the iron car is whizzing to and fro?—Doesn't the dancing foot feel for the switch-block even in the dance?—Can the piano shut out the sound of the iron wheels grinding the tracks? No, not a single day belongs to you—or to your man!—the iron car keeps rolling, and the foot controls it, and the beat of it holds the man Can a drop out of a bucket grow into a river—can one day out of a thousand days make up a life? Do not be deceived by the profits no real profits could be spent in one day!—You have your profits—but you do not live! What good to you are profits—profits made by the foot—profits which make a man poor in living?—You have lost time—and so you have lost*

life—you have lost everything—time and life—and you should spit upon these gains which are worthless in the face of what you have lost! Cry out your losses—fill your mouths with fury and curses, cry out We have lost time and life—shout!—shout!—shout! Shout your demand—shout your will—shout what you want—shout if only to prove you have a voice—shout merely to shout—the Engineer!

*Workmen [throughout the entire hall] Shout! shout!*

*[The WORKMAN leaves the platform]*

*Workman [on the platform] Girls and Girls—we promise you!—Women and Women—we promise you!—Mothers and Mothers—we promise you—not one of us will drive a spade into the rubbish—not one of us will lay a brick—not one of us drive home a rivet in steel—Our resolve remains unshakable—the Works will never go up—unless they give us a new Engineer! Come and crowd this hall every day—Brothers and brothers—Sons and sons—Husbands and husbands—each as determined as the other—and let there be one unbendable will in the assemblies—up with your right hands—out with the oath—no Gas—if this Engineer remains!*

*All Men, All Women No Gas!—if this Engineer remains!*

*[WORKMAN leaves the platform]*

*Strange Workman Our resolutions tally with yours—I am sent here by the men of our plant—and the plant is standing still! We are waiting, we are with you—until you give us the word to take up work again. Count upon us—state your demands!*

*All Men, All Women The Engineer!*

*[STRANGE WORKMAN leaves the platform  
Another STRANGE WORKMAN ascends it]*

*Strange Workman I am a stranger to you I hail from a distant factory I bring you this message—we have laid down our work because you are on strike We are with you to the last Hold out—stand firm—force your demands—for you speak in the name of all—you are responsible for all!*

*All Men, All Women The Engineer!*

*[STRANGE WORKMAN leaves the platform]*

*Workman [on platform] We shout, but our shouts do not cause this hall to explode Our shouts go thundering into the vault up there and echo from blocks of concrete, but they*

do not go ringing out into the world—Out! out of the hall!—make for the house—his house—thunder your cries at him who still keeps on the Engineer!—Form ranks!—march across the waste of ashes—go look him out—he cannot hear us here—he cannot hear us here!

*All Men, All Women* On to the house!—he cannot hear us here!

*[The Crowd pushes tumultuously toward the doors A stormy babble of voices]*

*Voice of Billionaire's Son* I hear you—here! *[A deathly silence]*

*Voice of Billionaire's Son* I am here—in this hall—I have heard you!

*[A buzzing and craning of necks among the crowd]*

*Voice of Billionaire's Son* I will answer you—here in this very hall!

*[Great excitement and movement]*

*Voice of Billionaire's Son* You shall listen to me now! *[A path is cleared for him]*

*Clerk [leaping upon the platform]* Don't let him speak!—Don't let him come up!—Crowd together—don't make room!—Run! run out of the hall!—run to the works!—Run!—and clean up the rubbish—put up the scaffolds—rebuild the plant!—Don't listen to him!—Don't listen to him—Don't listen to him! Run!—run!—I'll run ahead—back to my desk!—I must write—write!—write!

*[Rushes off platform]*

*Billionaire's Son [on platform]* I have been in the hall from the very beginning You could not see me, because I shouted with you Girl, I was a brother to you—Woman, I was a husband to you—Mother, I was a son to you Every cry that passed your lips passed my own! And now I am here Here I stand—stand above you—because I must state the final demand which you cannot state. You make a demand, but your demand is only a sand-grain of the mountain of demands you must make You scream and scold about a trifle What is the Engineer? What is he to you? What can he be to you—you who have come through the fiery furnace? What can he be to you who have passed through Annihilation? What can the Engineer be to you? It is only a cry of yours, a word that means nothing, an echoing word!—I know the Engineer is like a red rag to you—the sight of him brings back the Horror to you, the mere sight of him The Engineer and the Explosion are one—the formula could

not keep the Gas in check—this Engineer controlled this formula—and this formula brought on the Explosion You think that you can put out the Explosion only after you have chased away the Engineer And that is why you cry out against him—Do you not know that the formula tallies? That it tallies, that it is correct to the very limits of calculation? You know this—yet you cry out against the Engineer!

*Voices [sullenly]* The Engineer!

*Billionaire's Son* Your cry comes from a deeper source! Your demand comprises much more than you demand! I urge you to demand more! *[Silence]*

*Billionaire's Son* What was there so terrible about the Explosion? What did it burn up—what did it rend apart? Did it go booming and hissing over one of you—one of you who was not already mutilated before the Explosion? Girl—your brother—was he whole?—Mother—your son, was he whole?—Woman—your man—was he whole? Was there a single man in all the works who was whole and sound? What havoc could the Explosion wreak upon you?—You who were shattered before the walls fell—you who were bleeding from many wounds before the crash came—you who were cripples—with one foot—with one hand—with two burning eyes in a dead skull—can the Engineer make this good? Can any demand make this good again? I tell you—demand more—demand more!

*Girls, Women, Mothers [shrilly]* My brother!—my son!—my husband!

*Billionaire's Son* Brother and Brothers—Son and Sons—Man and Men—the call goes forth, the summons soars up from this hall—over the wreckage—over the avalanches that buried brother and brothers—son and sons—man and men—and it comes circling back into your hearts—demand to be yourselves!

*[Silence]*

*Billionaire's Son* Demand!—and I will fulfill!—You are men—you represent Humanity—in the son, in the brother—in the husband! A thousand ties bind you to all about you Now you are parts—each is a perfect unit in the great Commonwealth The whole is like a body—a great, living body Deliver yourselves from confusion—heal yourselves!—you that have been wounded—be human, human, human! *[Silence]*

*Billionaire's Son* Demand!—and I will ful-

fill! Brother—you are a man—you are Man  
That hand of yours which clutched the lever  
shall cripple you no longer!—Son, you are a  
man—your eyes shall leave the sight-tube and  
gaze into the blue distances! Husband, you  
are a man—your day shall be the day of all  
the days you shall live! [Silence]

*Billionaire's Son* Space is yours—and all  
that life can give within this space—it is  
Earth—it is your home You are human be-  
ings in the great house of Earth Every  
wonder is known to you—your will opens the  
way to all things!—In you the heavens re-  
flect themselves and the surface of the Earth  
is covered with the garment of many-coloured  
grasses—as with a flood The day's work is  
great and full of gladness and full of many  
new inventions But you are not inventions—  
you are perfected even now—complete—from  
this new beginning onward You have  
achieved a greater humanity—after this last  
shift you are done with the task to which you  
had been pledged!—You have completed the  
shift, toiled to the very extreme—the dead  
have sanctified the ground—you, that part  
of you, lies buried! [Silence]

*Billionaire's Son* All that you demand—I  
will grant—To-morrow you shall be free hu-  
man beings—in all their fulness and unity!  
Pastures broad and green shall be your new  
domains The settlement shall cover the  
ashes and the wreckage which now cover the  
land You are dismissed from bondage and  
from profit-making You are settlers—with  
only simple needs and with the highest re-  
wards—you are men—Men! [Silence]

*Billionaire's Son* Come out of the hall—  
come, walk upon the new homesteads—take  
measure of the land! No great effort is  
needed—but all creation waits—limitless—  
vast! Come out of the hall—come into the  
open! [He leaves the platform] [Silence]  
[The ENGINEER stands upon the plat-  
form]

A Voice [shrilly] The Engineer!

*Engineer* I am here!—Listen to me I will  
bow to your will—I will go I will take upon  
me the great shame which will be branded  
upon my brow—if I should go I will take  
upon me all the curses which go howling up  
against me—and my departure shall be the  
confession of my monstrous guilt I will be  
guilty—as you wish!—I will go—so that you  
may return to the works!—The way is free—  
it leads back to the works!

*Billionaire's Son* [from below] Come out of  
the hall!—and build up the colony!

*Engineer* Stay here!—stay here in this  
hall!—my voice is big enough for all of you—  
here you can hear me thunder!

*Billionaire's Son* Come out of the hall!

*Engineer* Stay in the hall—refuse to be  
frauds! [Growls and murmurs]

*Billionaire's Son* Hatred is still at work  
here—outside the winds will sweep it away.

*Engineer* You cheat the very shame with  
which you would scorch me I am going—  
and you must go—back to work!

*Billionaire's Son* Fling open the doors—  
out!—into the daylight!

*Engineer* You must go back to the works —  
Do not pile fraud upon fraud—do not betray  
yourselves Face the victory you have won—  
the victory that crowns you—Gas!—It is *your*  
work which creates these miracles in steel  
Power, infinite power, throbs in the machines  
which you set going—Gas!—*You* give speed  
to the trains which go thundering your tri-  
umphs over bridges which *you* rivet *You*  
launch leviathans upon the seas, and *you*  
divide the seas into tracks which *your* com-  
passes decree! You build steep and trembling  
towers into the air which goes singing about  
the antennae from which the sparks speak  
to all the world! *You* lift motors from the  
earth and these go howling through the air  
out of sheer fury against the annihilation of  
their weight! You who are by nature so de-  
fenceless that any animal may attack and  
destroy you—you who are vulnerable in every  
pore of your skin—you are the victors of the  
world! [Profound silence]

*Billionaire's Son* [at the foot of the platform,  
pointing at the ENGINEER] He is once more  
showing you the pretty picture-book—of  
your childhood days He would tempt you  
with memories But you are no longer chil-  
dren—for now you have become adult!

*Engineer* You are heroes in soot and  
sweat—You are heroes at the lever—at the  
sight-tube—at the switch-block You persist  
grandly, immovably, amidst the lashing of the  
pulleys and the thumping and thundering of  
the pistons!—And even the greatest ordeal of  
all cannot appal you for long—the Explosion!

*Billionaire's Son* Come out of the hall!

*Engineer* Where would you go?—would  
you leave your kingdom and enter a sheep-  
fold? Go pottering from early till late in the  
tiny quadrangle of your farms? Plant paltry

weeds with those hands of yours—hands that created towering forces? And your passion for work—shall it serve merely to nourish you—and no longer create?

*Billionaire's Son* Come out of the hall!

*Engineer* Here you are rulers—in these works where the motive power of the whole world is born—you create Gas! There is your rule, your mastery—the empire you have established—shift upon shift—day and night—full of feverish work! Would you barter this power for the blade of grass that sprouts as it will?—Here you are rulers—there you are—peasants!

*A Voice [crying]* Peasants!

*Other Voices* Peasants!

*More Voices* Peasants!

*All Men, All Women [a torrent of shouts and upflung fists]* Peasants!!!

*Engineer [stands there in a triumphant attitude]*

*Billionaire's Son [at foot of the platform]* Will you listen to him—or to me?

*All Men, All Women* To the Engineer!

*Engineer* The Explosion has not sapped your courage! Who gives in to Fear?

*Billionaire's Son* I do not wish you to fear—Is it not I who make the greater demands upon your courage?—Do I not ask you to realise—Man? How can you become peasants again—after you have been workmen?—Do we not expect you to climb still higher? The peasant in you has been overcome—and now the Workman must be overcome—and Man must be the goal! This mission thrusts you forward—not backward. Have you not ripened—after this last experience? How far could you still go—working with your hands—working in shifts?—Are your thundering trains, and vaulting bridges and flying motors sufficient recompense for your fever? No, you would laugh at the miserable wages!—Are you tempted by the rich profits which we share? But you waste these again—as you waste yourselves!—The fever is in you—a madness of toil, which brings forth nothing. It is you that the fever eats. It is not your house that you build! You are not the wardens—you sit in the cells! You are pent about by walls, and these walls are the work of your own hands. Come forth! I say, come forth! You are heroes—who do not fear the new adventure! You do not fear to go to the end of the road—terror cannot palsy your steps! The road has come to an

end—exalt your courage with fresh courage—Man has arrived!

*Engineer* You would be peasants, slaves to grubbing toil!

*Billionaire's Son* You are men—in all your Wholeness and all your Oneness!

*Engineer* Petty needs will mock your rightful claims!

*Billionaire's Son* All that you hope for you shall receive!

*Engineer* Your days would be lost in sloth!

*Billionaire's Son* You are working at a timeless task!

*Engineer* Not a single invention could take form!

*Billionaire's Son* You are honourably discharged—you are promoted—to human be—

*Engineer [holding a revolver over his head]*. Shout—and let destruction come!

*Billionaire's Son* Leave destruction and come forth to the consummation—of Humanity!

*Engineer* Shout!—and your shout shall destroy me—but go back to work!

[*The muzzle at his temple Silence*]

*Engineer* Dare the word!

*Voice [suddenly]* The Engineer shall lead us!

*Voices and Voices* The Engineer shall lead us!

*All Men, All Women* The Engineer shall lead us!

*Engineer* Come out of the hall!—back to the works!—From Explosion to Explosion!—Gas!!

*All Women, All Men* Gas!

[*The ENGINEER leaves the platform  
Broad doors are flung open The  
WORKERS stream out*]

*Billionaire's Son [tottering upon the platform]* Do not strike down your brother Man! You shall not manufacture cripples! You, Brother, are more than a hand! You, Son, are more than a pair of eyes!—You, Husband, live longer than one day!—You are eternal creatures—and perfect from the very beginning!—do not let the days mutilate you, nor dumb mechanical movements of the hand—be greater, be greedy for the higher thing—in yourselves—in yourselves!!

[*Empty hall*]

*Billionaire's Son [summoning up all his strength]* I have seen man—I must protect him against himself!

## ACT FIVE

*A wall of brick or concrete, partly shattered and blackened by the Explosion A wide iron gate, thrown from its hinges, in the centre of this wall A waste of rubbish*

*Outside the gate a soldier with rifle and fixed bayonet*

*The BILLIONAIRE'S SON with a bandage about his head, standing in the shelter of the wall*

*An OFFICER, a CAPTAIN, in a waiting attitude, in the centre*

*Billionaire's Son* It is all a horrible mistake I must speak—I must explain.

*Captain* They met you with a volley of stones

*Billionaire's Son* They would not do it a second time—when they see that they have injured me

*Captain* I would not be so sure of that

*Billionaire's Son* The sight of the soldiers angers them That is the real reason

*Captain* You sought this shelter yourself

*Billionaire's Son* Not for myself I wanted to shut off the works. I could do that in three or four words

*Captain* They won't let you speak even one word

*Billionaire's Son* But surely they would not attack me—when I want to justify myself!

*Captain.* Keep close to the wall!

*Billionaire's Son* Will you escort me out?

*Captain* No

*Billionaire's Son* No?

*Captain* They might also attack me—and I should be obliged to open fire

*Billionaire's Son* No, no, not that!—I must wait then, until they come to their senses!

*[The SOLDIER before the gate is relieved by another SOLDIER Cries and clamour from thousands of throats]*

*Billionaire's Son* What are they shouting for now?

*Captain* The sentry is being relieved

*Billionaire's Son* This confusion is terrible! Can't they understand what I am after? They are my brethren—I am merely older, more mature—and must keep my hand over them!

*[Enter the GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONER from the right]*

*Government Commissioner [at the gate, peering out]* The situation looks serious! *[To the CAPTAIN]* Are you prepared for all emergencies?

*Captain* Machine-guns

*[The tumult without has arisen afresh and continues until the GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONER moves away from the gate]*

*Government Commissioner [to BILLIONAIRE'S SON, lifting his top-hat, and looking for papers in his portfolio]* The extraordinary and dangerous developments in your works have compelled the Government to discuss the situation with you. May I present my authorisation?

*Billionaire's Son [taking the paper, reading, looking up]* Full powers?

*Government Commissioner* Under certain conditions Shall we proceed to negotiations—here?

*Billionaire's Son* I shall not leave this place

*Government Commissioner [putting the paper back into his portfolio, taking out another]* The events which have led up to this strike may, no doubt, be summarized as follows—After the catastrophe the workmen refused to take up the rebuilding of the plant because certain conditions which they had made were not accepted by you, these conditions involving the discharge of the Engineer

*Billionaire's Son* That would not have prevented fresh catastrophes!

*Government Commissioner* The Government can recognise only facts

*Billionaire's Son* But the Explosion is certain to occur again—there is only this formula—only this—or no Gas!

*Government Commissioner* Future eventualities cannot be accepted as evidence The condition imposed by the Workmen was rejected by you As a consequence the Workmen continue the strike—which has now spread to neighbouring works, and is extending itself from day to day

*Billionaire's Son* Yes! Yes!

*Government Commissioner* In the meantime the Engineer has offered his resignation at a meeting of the Workmen A sudden change of feeling on the part of the Workmen induced them to drop their demand, and now they wish the Engineer to remain

*Billionaire's Son* Yes!

*Government Commissioner* The cause of the strike has thereby been done away with, and the Workmen are willing to take up work again

*Billionaire's Son* As you see—they are clamoring to get in.

*Government Commissioner* But now you have issued an order forbidding them to return. You declare that you could not possibly render yourself responsible for the production of Gas!

*Billionaire's Son* No—for the destruction of human life!

*Government Commissioner* The Government is fully cognisant of the uncommon severity of the misfortune which has regrettably taken place

*Billionaire's Son* That says little

*Government Commissioner* The number of victims has called forth the greatest sympathy. The Government is preparing a vote of condolence in Parliament. The Government is of the opinion that in making this proclamation in so conspicuous a place it has done full justice to you and to the Workmen.

*Billionaire's Son* Yes. The Government has no power beyond this. The rest will be my task.

*Government Commissioner* It is with the gravest concern that the Government has heard of your further intentions of permanently keeping the works from being rebuilt.

*Billionaire's Son* You must not doubt my powers—I will carry out my plans!

*Government Commissioner* [drawing forth a new paper] A conference as to how this danger may best be averted has already taken place.

*Billionaire's Son* Give me a few soldiers—and give me a guarantee that I shall be heard—out there!

*Government Commissioner* The danger involved in a stoppage of the production of Gas has induced the Government to make you a confidential communication.

*Billionaire's Son* [staring at him] You—demand—Gas!

*Government Commissioner* The whole armament industry is operating upon a basis of Gas. The lack of this motive power would inflict great damage upon the manufacture of war material. And a war is imminent. Our programme of armaments cannot be carried out without this supply of energy. It is this solemn contingency which forces the Government to declare that it cannot any longer tolerate a delay in the delivery of Gas to the armament plants!

*Billionaire's Son* Am—I—not—my—own—master—on—my—own—ground?

*Government Commissioner* The Govern-

ment is impelled by a sincere desire to come to an understanding with you. It is prepared to further the reconstruction by every means in its power. Toward this end it has ordered four hundred motor-lorries, with tools and workmen—they will be here in the course of the hour. The clearance of the wreckage can be taken in hand at once.

*Billionaire's Son* —To make weapons—to be used against human beings!

*Government Commissioner* I trust that you will treat my communication with the utmost secrecy.

*Billionaire's Son* I—I will bellow it out—I will look for confidants in every nook and corner!

*Government Commissioner* I can well understand your excitement. But the Government is face to face with a grim necessity.

*Billionaire's Son* Do not blaspheme! It is Man alone who is necessary!—Why must you inflict new wounds upon him—we find it so hard to cure the old!—Let me talk to them—I must go —

[At the gate He is greeted with howls]

*Captain* [pulling him back] You will unloose the storm!

*Billionaire's Son* [tottering against the wall] —Are we all mad? —

*Government Commissioner* It is important that the Government should know whether or not you intend to persist in your refusal to let the Workmen recommence work?

*Billionaire's Son* Now—more than ever, I regard it as my duty—to refuse.

*Government Commissioner* You persist in your former refusal?

*Billionaire's Son* As long as I can breathe and speak!

*Government Commissioner* I must then make use of the power imposed in me by the Government. In view of the danger which threatens the defence of the Realm, the Government is obliged to dispossess you of your works for the time being and to carry on the manufacture of Gas under Government control. The reconstruction of the works will take place at the expense of the Government and will be taken in hand at once. We trust that we may count upon your making no attempt at resistance. We should greatly regret being forced to adopt more rigorous measures against you!—Captain, open the gates—I wish to communicate the essential points to the Workmen.



[At the gate A stormy tumult breaks loose]  
*Captain.* Stand back!—stones!

*Government Commissioner* [retreating to the shelter of the wall] This is incredible!

[The uproar continues]

*Government Commissioner* These people simply hinder—

*Billionaire's Son* I do not fear them—

[At the gate The uproar at its maximum]

*Billionaire's Son* [holds up his arms on high]

[The surge of the tumult draws nearer]

*Captain* [shouting to the *Government Commissioner*] They are coming!

[He goes through the gate—issues orders towards the left A machine-gun detachment comes and takes up position The CAPTAIN stands, holding his naked sword over his head, prepared to give the signal Deep silence]

*Government Commissioner* [close to the BILLIONAIRE'S SON] Why won't you forestall this bloodshed?

*Billionaire's Son* [stands as though stunned]

*Government Commissioner* Here [he hands him his white handkerchief] They will understand this sign Wave this white flag!

*Billionaire's Son* [obeys mechanically]

*Government Commissioner* You see—that works— They are dropping their stones! [To the CAPTAIN] Throw the gates wide open! [Soldiers throw open the gates] Withdraw the cordon! [The CAPTAIN and the machine-gun detachment withdraw To the BILLIONAIRE'S SON] I will go tell them at what point the lorries will deliver the tools I'll lead the people there myself!

[He goes through the gate Soon after high, clear shouts and cheers are heard without—these grow rapidly fainter Silence]

*Billionaire's Son* [sinks upon a heap of debris]

[Enter the DAUGHTER—in black]

*Daughter* [goes up to him—puts her arms about his shoulders]

*Billionaire's Son* [looks up in surprise]

*Daughter* Do you not know me?

*Billionaire's Son* Daughter!—in black!

*Daughter* My husband is dead

*Billionaire's Son* Have you come to reproach me—Will you, too, cast a stone upon me?

*Daughter* [shakes her head] Are you all alone here?

*Billionaire's Son* Yes, I am alone at last—

like all men who wish to give themselves to all men!

*Daughter* [touching the bandage about his forehead] Did they strike you?

*Billionaire's Son.* They struck me—struck me, too There are bolts that rebound and wound both—the archer and the target

*Daughter* Is all danger over?

*Billionaire's Son* Are men born? Born of women—men who do not scream nor make horrible threats? Has Time lost count of itself—and thrust Mankind into the light? What does Man look like?

*Daughter* Tell me!

*Billionaire's Son* I have lost all memory of Man What was he like? [He takes her hands] Here are hands—and growing to these—[taking her by the arms]—are limbs, members—and the body unites them—parts that are active, parts of the whole, and all a part of life—!

*Daughter* Tell me!

*Billionaire's Son* The torrent rages too hideously—it overflows the banks Cannot a dam be built which will hold in the flood? Cannot this raging be bounded, cannot it be used to water the barren places of the Earth and convert them into pastures of peaceful green? Is there no halting? [He draws his DAUGHTER close to him] Tell me, where can I find Man? When will he make his appearance—when will he announce his name—Man? When will he understand himself? And plant the Tree of his Knowledge of Himself? When will he rid himself of the primal curse?—when will he re-create the creation which he has ruined—Man?—Was I not happy in having had a glimpse of him and his coming?—Did I not behold him clearly with all the symbols of his fullness of power—silent, yet speaking the tongue that all the world understands?—Man! Was Man not close to me—Mankind? Can Man be extinguished—must he not come again and again—now that at least one man has seen his face? Must he not arrive—to-morrow or the day after to-morrow—every day—every hour? Am I not a witness for him—and for his lineage and his advent?—Do I not know him—his bold, beautiful face? Can I doubt any longer?

*Daughter* [sinking on her knees before him] I will give him birth

THE END

GAS—PART II

BY GEORG KAISER

*Translated from the German by WINIFRED KATZIN*



## CHARACTERS

THE BILLIONAIRE WORKER

THE CHIEF ENGINEER

FIRST

SECOND

THIRD

FOURTH } FIGURES IN BLUE

FIFTH

SIXTH

SEVENTH

FIRST

SECOND

THIRD

FOURTH } FIGURES IN YELLOW

FIFTH

SIXTH

SEVENTH

*Workers Men, Women, Old Men, Old Women,  
Youths and Girls*

*The action takes place in the same country as that of "Gas I," but a  
generation later*

## GAS—PART II

### ACT ONE

*Concrete Hall* Light falls in dusty beams from arc-lamp From misty height of dome dense wires vertically to iron platform, thence diagonally distributed to small iron tables—three right, three left Red wires to the left, green to the right At each table a FIGURE IN BLUE—seated stiffly, unaformed—gazing into glass pane in the table which, lighting up, reflects its colour on the face above it, red to the left, green to the right Across and further down, a longer iron table chequered like a chess-board with green and red plugs—operated by the FIRST FIGURE IN BLUE For a time, silence

*Second Figure in Blue* [at red pane] Report from third fighting-sector—Enemy concentration preparing [Pane dark]

*First Figure in Blue* [switches red plug]

*Fifth Figure in Blue* [at green pane] Report from third works—production one lot below contract [Pane dark]

*First Figure in Blue* [switches green plug]

*Third Figure in Blue* [at red pane] Report from second fighting-sector—Enemy concentration preparing [Pane dark]

*First Figure in Blue* [switches red plug]

*Sixth Figure in Blue* [at green pane] Report from second works—production one lot below contract [Pane dark]

*First Figure in Blue* [switches green plug]

*Fourth Figure in Blue* [at red pane] Report from first fighting-sector—Enemy concentration preparing [Pane dark]

*First Figure in Blue* [switches red plug]

*Seventh Figure in Blue* [at green pane] Report from first works—production two lots below contract [Pane dark]

*First Figure in Blue* [switches green plug] [Silence]

*Second Figure in Blue* [at red pane] Report from third fighting-sector—enemy sweeping forward. [Pane dark]

*First Figure in Blue* [switches red plug]

*Fifth Figure in Blue* [at green pane] Report from third works—production three lots below contract [Pane dark]

*First Figure in Blue* [switches green plug]

*Third Figure in Blue* [at red pane] Report

from second fighting-sector—enemy sweeping forward [Pane dark]

*First Figure in Blue* [switches red plug]

*Sixth Figure in Blue* [at green pane] Report from second works—production five lots below contract [Pane dark]

*First Figure in Blue* [switches green plug]

*Fourth Figure in Blue* [at red pane] Report from first fighting-sector—enemy sweeping forward

*First Figure in Blue* [switches red plug]

*Seventh Figure in Blue* [at green pane] Report from third fighting-sector—enemy breaking through [Pane dark]

*First Figure in Blue* [switches green plug] [Silence]

*Second Figure in Blue* [at red pane] Report from third fighting-sector—enemy breaking through [Pane dark]

*First Figure in Blue* [switches red plug]

*Fifth Figure in Blue* [at green pane] Report from third works—production nine lots below contract [Pane dark]

*First Figure in Blue* [switches green plug]

*Third Figure in Blue* [at red pane] Report from second fighting-sector—enemy breaking through

*First Figure in Blue* [switches red plug]

*Sixth Figure in Blue* [at green pane] Report from second works—production eleven lots below contract [Pane dark]

*First Figure in Blue* [switches green plug]

*Fourth Figure in Blue* [at red pane] Report from first fighting-sector—enemy breaking through [Pane dark]

*First Figure in Blue* [switches red plug]

*Seventh Figure in Blue* [at green pane] Report from first works—production twelve lots below contract [Pane dark]

*First Figure in Blue* [into telephone by ham]

The chief engineer!

*The Chief Engineer* [comes in aged in petrification of fanatical working energy, gaunt profile, white streak in hair, white smock]

*First Figure in Blue* Control stations report less production of gas Is defaults against Must by twelve lots

*Chief Engineer* Collapse of workers at pressure-gauges, at switch-gears, at levers

*First Figure in Blue* Why no substitutes?

*Chief Engineer* Each shift combed of each superfluous man or woman

*First Figure in Blue* Disease?

*Chief Engineer* Then without visible sign

*First Figure in Blue* Delivery of food unhindered?

*Chief Engineer* Supply continuous, variety, plenty.

*First Figure in Blue* Disappointment over payment out of profits to be shared?

*Chief Engineer* Already profits in net cash stuff wide even boys' pockets

*First Figure in Blue* Then how do you account for the discrepancy?

*Chief Engineer* Movement creates its own law Excessive repetition of single action blunts the onspurring will to work Gas is no longer a goal—purpose vanished in the little motion which repeated and repeated became purposeless, part without whole Planless the man at his tool—the work withdrew ever farther out of sight as the man slipped day by day ever deeper into sameness and monotony Wheel by wheel in whirring hum yet never cogged within next wheel and next wheel Motion roaring upwards into emptiness and, unresisted, hurtling down to earth again

*First Figure in Blue* Can you discover no means by which to assure production?

*Chief Engineer* New masses of workers to the machines

*First Figure in Blue* Not to be found after sevenfold siftings

*Chief Engineer* Children are already on full time

*First Figure in Blue* Then what?

*Chief Engineer* Upleaping increase of gas deficit

*First Figure in Blue* [pointing to table] Do you see this? Calculation of attack and defence—comparison of force on either side

*Chief Engineer* Red dominates

*First Figure in Blue* Enemy spreads

*Chief Engineer* Green recedes

*First Figure in Blue* Gas withholds defence [CHIEF ENGINEER silent] This table works out the sum We lack numbers, but our technical equipment is superior That balances the outcome So long as we maintain our technical strength With the impetus of the gas which we alone produce, our technical force far exceeds the enemy's One lot of gas short of what is calculated here

—and we lose our chance of salvation more completely than we have lost it already

*Chief Engineer* [staring] Then the possibility of our crushing the enemy is no longer ?

*First Figure in Blue* Chimera now!

*Chief Engineer* The end?

*First Figure in Blue* At best a draw with both sides check-mate [CHIEF ENGINEER catches at table for support] It simplifies the issue It fell out the only possible way Fight and downfall Attack and resistance to the last on either side Adversary against adversary to the last drop of blood, and they fall together The enfeebled remnant that remains soon vanishes None escape from that annihilation [strongly] This is knowledge only we possess!

*Chief Engineer* [pulling himself together] Then what?

*First Figure in Blue* Increase in production of gas without consideration of man, woman, or child No more shifts—let one shift overlap the other without release Every last hand mobilised from collapse to collapse No rest, no respite Let the last dead hand fall from the lever, the last dead foot slip off the switch-pedal, the last glazed eye turn sightless from the pressure-gauge—let this table here show The last enemy wiped off the face of the earth, our last fighter dead at his post

*Chief Engineer* [tensely] I will fulfill that order

*First Figure in Blue* [stretching out his hand] In with us, into the tunnel that has no exit

*Chief Engineer* [taking his hand] Gas!

[He goes Outside nearby, high, shrill sirens, others farther off—fainter—silence]

*First Figure in Blue* [into telephone] The Billionaire Worker [he comes—middle twenties—worker's dress, shaved head, barefoot] Is this your shift?

*Billionaire Worker.* No, but the relay summons has just sounded

*First Figure in Blue* Prematurely.

*Billionaire Worker* You must have been forced into that decision

*First Figure in Blue* Under what compulsion?

*Billionaire Worker* No worker can manage the earlier shift

*First Figure in Blue* What is your advice?

*Billionaire Worker* What value has my advice here?

*First Figure in Blue* You heard—I put the question to you

*Billionaire Worker* You can inform yourself by asking any worker in the factories

*First Figure in Blue* I ask no worker—I want my information from the chief

*Billionaire Worker* What chief?

*First Figure in Blue* [looking at him intently] The one who stands before me

*Billionaire Worker* Is this your abdication?

*First Figure in Blue* The new task demands redoubled strength The chief and we unite our efforts

*Billionaire Worker* What do you want of us?

*First Figure in Blue* Gas with tenfold energy

*Billionaire Worker* [with a shrug] You decide the production

*First Figure in Blue* That does not suffice The workers are slack. They're soft—orders would run to water in their brains instead of stiffening them to action

*Billionaire Worker* Make your punishments harder

*First Figure in Blue* And take them off their work

*Billionaire Worker* Can none be spared?

*First Figure in Blue* From the last great spending of our forces? No Annihilation on both sides—but annihilation!

*Billionaire Worker* [flinches, recovers himself] What do you want of me?

*First Figure in Blue* To send through the whole works a galvanizing current Fanatise them for the final run. Hate and pride can kindle a fever to heat the coldest veins for once—night will become day in the struggle to reach the goal that blood-red beacon lights

*Billionaire Worker* Is that the goal?

*First Figure in Blue* Which your voice shall announce Go amongst them in all the shops—let your words sound amidst the roar of the pistons and the hum of turning belts—overcome that din with your shout to arms that shows them the goal and lends meaning to their effort Hands will grasp levers with new strength—feet tighten on the switch-pedals—eyes clear at the pressure-gauges The floodgates of work shall open wide and gas overpower power

*Billionaire Worker* [very calm] I am due for punishment if I miss my shift

*First Figure in Blue* You are no longer a worker

*Billionaire Worker* You have no power to dismiss any worker in this factory.

*First Figure in Blue* I lay you under special contract

*Billionaire Worker* I decline to accept it

*First Figure in Blue* Do you wish to make conditions?

*Billionaire Worker* I repeat the only one which is the one my mother and my mother's father demanded Set this factory free

*First Figure in Blue* [fiercely] Your grandfather and your mother protested against the production of gas Therefore it became necessary to use force in the works Otherwise our preparations for this war would have come to a standstill

*Billionaire Worker* Therefore their implacable refusal

*First Figure in Blue* We are engaged in a war such as no party was ever involved in before

*Billionaire Worker.* I have obeyed every order in silence

*First Figure in Blue* The time has come now for you to speak.

*Billionaire Worker* Against myself and against my mother?

*First Figure in Blue* For the workers who want gas After the explosion they came back—they rebuilt the factory—they stayed in the shops in spite of danger that hourly threatened They bowed in willingness before their master, whose name then was gas, whose name today is downfall if a voice they will heed will make it known to them Yours is that voice—at your "yes" the "yes" of thousands will light the train of fire for the ultimate destruction Come over to us, and the half-dead will spring to life again throughout these works

*Billionaire Worker.* I defend the legacy of my grandfather

*First Figure in Blue* The workers themselves laughed his plans to scorn

*Billionaire Worker* The form for people will manifest itself

*First Figure in Blue* For others who survive There is no future for us

*Billionaire Worker* There is always a way out

*First Figure in Blue* Do you seek one without us?

*Billionaire Worker.* With you and within you

*First Figure in Blue* [after a moment's reflection] We shall achieve by punishment the output we require

[He makes a gesture of dismissal *The BILLIONAIRE WORKER goes Silence*]

*Second Figure in Blue* [at red pane] Report from third fighting-sector—enemy pressure irresistible [Pane dark]

*First Figure in Blue* [switches red plug]

*Third Figure in Blue* [at red pane] Report from second fighting-sector—enemy pressure irresistible [Pane dark]

*First Figure in Blue* [switches red plug]

*Fourth Figure in Blue* [at red pane] Report from first fighting-sector—enemy pressure irresistible [Pane dark]

*First Figure in Blue* [springs up] No report from the factories?

*Chief Engineer* [enters hastily]

*Chief Engineer* Turmoil everywhere! Shift-changes hitched! Relief gang and gang on duty cease to cog! For the first time a gap opens in a system that has been flawless all the years The pendulum swings wild! The machine has stalled

*First Figure in Blue* Your organisation?

*Chief Engineer* Announced by sirens! Answered by the gang on duty with laying-down of tools—and by the relief-gang with ignoring it

*First Figure in Blue* Is anyone inciting them to resist?

*Chief Engineer* Not a wheel-minder among them! It's the machine that is running wild—and it's running wild because its works are moving to a different rhythm The new distribution of time has disturbed the old pace and drags it down to seconds which suffice for remembrance to remember themselves! Lightning flashes in heads and illuminates the path they have been driven along these years upon years! The tumult becomes a face grinning its hideousness into their horror-frozen minds!

*First Figure in Blue* Then — strike?

*Chief Engineer* What is that?

*First Figure in Blue* Are they leaving switch-gear, lever, observation dial?

*Chief Engineer* Already happenings of the past! Standstill turned into movement!

*First Figure in Blue* Commotion?

*Chief Engineer.* Flaming through the shops!

Not a voice—not a cry—no eloquence! Silence of ice—gazing before them—or stealing a glance at the next man who does likewise at his neighbour, and so on from partner to partner! It is out of their eyes it's coming—this thing that is on its way to shatter us to bits—this tempest!

*First Figure in Blue* A cordon round the shops—anyone attempting to leave to be stopped at the gates!

*Chief Engineer* Is there still time?

*Fifth Figure in Blue* [at green pane]. Report from third works . . .

*Chief Engineer* [goes to him—reading off] Work stands still—workers leaving shops!

*First Figure in Blue* Lock the others in  
*Sixth Figure in Blue* [at green pane] Report from second works . . .

*Chief Engineer* Work stands still. . . .

*Seventh Figure in Blue* [at green pane] Report from first works . . .

*Chief Engineer* Workers leaving shops!

*First Figure in Blue* Alarm throughout the works!

*Chief Engineer* Too late! We're crushed under the weight of their numbers See it towering fearfully over us, the wave about to break We have brought it towering over our heads—they come and we are here!

*First Figure in Blue* Are they through?

*Chief Engineer* In inevitable march The line presses back upon the place we drove them from There the storm gathers, there, when it breaks, it shall strike us—if we are here for the striking

*First Figure in Blue* [flinging the plugs together in disorder] The calculation did not come out—there was a remainder!

[He goes out with the *CHIEF ENGINEER* and the *FIGURES IN BLUE* The hall remains empty Then an ever-swell-ing crowd of people emerge in a circle against the dim grey walls—men young and middle-aged, old men, boys, in gray workers' clothes, shorn-headed and barefoot, women, young and middle-aged, old women, girls, in the same clothes, barefoot, with gray kerchiefs close round their hair A short distance from the tables the dead, silent, forward-pressing movement stops still The outbreak comes in a great flood—silent—yet full of haste The tables are overturned and passed from hand to hand until they vanish

*into the shadowy edge of the hall, the wires from platform to tables, from dome to platform, are torn away. Then utter silence. The women pull the kerchiefs off their heads and begin to smooth their hair.]*

*All [looking at one another—in a great shout] No gas!*

## ACT TWO

*Concrete hall. Dimmer light from the arc-lamps. Hall full.*

*Voices [rising clear through a murmurous swell] What of us?*

*Girl [on the platform—spreading her hair] Morning for us—day with a morning so filled with joy in light that it postpones the noon! Radiance streams from that morning, dawning as no morning dawned for us before. We open eyes of awe upon that wider vision, chaos of light in white and many colours—the wonder passes and is retrospect. Morning for me leads my lover to me by the hand.*

*Young Worker [beside girl on the platform] Morning for you and me and our fulfilment. Empty were being and seeking from day to day, neither yours nor mine until this bright morning. Now the locked waters flow once more, tide strong against the shore, riotous with colour, loud with wedding joy!*

*Girl [embracing him] Morning for you!*

*Young Worker [holding her] Morning for you.*

*Girls and Young Workers [pressing about the platform—embracing] Morning for us.*

*Voices of the Others More for us!*

*Woman [on the platform] Noon for us. Out of that beginning I had not yet drawn the arc that sweeps towards the height—it crept flat along the ground. Between man and wife nothing lay behind the morning—the dead husk rustled, riveting but not uniting. Now it showers out of the brightness, and the rainbow shines overhead. The clouds flaunt gold, they vanish in fire of glory the sky around, raining beneficence, warming and nourishing the dead-brittle crust. Man and wife at noon, one life, one breath, absorbed and welded, indistinguishable. Demands shall be answered, last and first, the answer rings forth with a noonday clamour through the blue noon over us.*

*Man [beside her on the platform] Noon*

*streams from you, driving a swarm of blue-rimmed clouds. Noon spread over me like a tent of permanence—bounding the space where I am yours. No exit to seduce where nothing serves—no will that defies where nothing signifies—the syllable is breathed and understanding outreaches further words where both command. Desire grew bold, immeasurable—body binds body, mated—our law is the doubling of being and being unabated, forbidding nothing, allowing nothing, for oneness knows neither pleading nor resistance and is indivisible in Man and Woman at noon.*

*Woman [reaching out her hands] Noon for you!*

*Man [taking them] Noon for you!*

*Men and Women [round the platform, seeking one another's hands] Noon for us!*

*[MAN and WOMAN down from platform.]*

*Voices of Others More for us!*

*Old Woman [on the platform] Evening for us. Once to be still after the day's round, feet quiet in their shoes. What were morning and noon to me? No difference to me between the noon and the morning. One and the same and all the same pattern of bitter labour, slipping by like muddy trickling water over bumps in a stream-bed we can't see the bottom of. That was morning and noon for us.*

*Was I alone? Was no one by me in the beginning and after? Was I so quite alone? Did I go under with only myself, reach out my hand only for my own other hand to save me from sinking, sinking? Had I died lonely even then? Evening brings life, adding all the lost hours to the hours that shall be. Time is dealt out to a new measure—I hold out my two hands and join them about nothingness—for it pours out of them—dazzled I look and see the treasure before me which noon and morning hid and evening reveals.*

*Old Man [beside her on the platform] For us the evening. Rest from the aimless, driven haste, trees and shade for us now. Where whirls the tumult? Where are they hurrying? Drowsy birds twitter in the branches—wind sighs, rustles. Day ebbs away. Is it late? Morning is forcing and crowding without peace, without end. Was there loss? The curve of a lip can extravagantly bestow. You suffered no want, I promised myself nothing—and our evening discloses a plenty we shall never exhaust. [Leads her with him down from the platform.]*

*Old Men and Women* [moving towards them—supporting one another] Evening for us!  
*Voices of the Others* More for us!  
*A Voice* What of us?  
*Some Voices* More for us!  
*Other Voices* What of us?  
*A Wave of Voices* More for us!  
*A Counter-Wave of Voices* What of us?  
*Voices upon Voices* [in flood and counter-flood] More for us! What of us? [Ending in a great cry Silence]

*A Voice* The Billionaire Worker!  
*All the Voices Together* [swelling—uniting—triumphing] The Billionaire Worker! [Silence]

*Billionaire Worker* [ascends the platform]  
 I stand here, yours Above you only by these steps I climb with my feet [On the platform]  
 No mind more deep-thinking—no mouth more eloquent before you You call to morning and to evening and to noon—and make the speakable articulate with words forever relevant For you, Young Girl, the morning, dawn, and beginning of your life—and your sisters' here and your sisters' yet to come That is primeval law! For you, Youth, the fire of early day, beating in blood and pulses with the first embrace—and in your brothers' here and in your brothers' yet to come That is primeval law! For you, Woman, day big with noon, season of all fulfillment—and for all these women about you and all who are yet to come That is primeval law! For you, Man, the high stars' brand of mighty noon—and for all these men about you and all who are yet to come That is primeval law! For you, old men and old women, evening falling on shoulders, into laps, out of shadow and calm airs—lulling into the night that shall receive your sleep without cry, without fear That is primeval law! [Stronger] Day is about you again—day and its fullness, morning and noon and evening Law is restored and shines out from new tablets You have come home again—out of bondage—returned to the ultimate duties of life

*Voices* What of us?

*Billionaire Worker* Proclaim yourselves in your self-recognition—under bitterest oppression crushed to earth—penned in slavery like beasts for the slaughter—you shall be heard! Your experience shall be your seal and oath—this is no child's play Let your cry be heard—a truth of truths—in a great YES!

*Voices upon Voices* What of us?

*Billionaire Worker* Report yourselves in your unfolding! Your discovery would turn to sacrilege were you to hide what you have found Silence would set a stain upon your souls, black and terrible, never to be effaced. The air in this house of yours will turn foul if you bar your windows shut and keep that light from shining on the streets without You would stand cursed in that instant and forever damned

*All the Voices Together* What of us?

*Billionaire Worker* Spread your tidings abroad! Send your cry forth out of this hall over all the world Spare no labour—it shall be your last Give of your treasure. it is inexhaustible and will return tenfold Roll the dome clear!

[Silence]

*Voices upon Voices* Roll the dome clear!

*All the Voices Together* Roll the dome clear!

*Billionaire Worker* Stretch the wire that shall flash your message around the earth's circle!

*Voices* Stretch the wire!

*Voices upon Voices* Stretch the wire!

*All the Voices Together* Stretch the wire!

*Billionaire Worker* Send out the signal of truce to all the world's fighters!

*Voices* Send out the signal!

*Voices upon Voices* Send out the signal!

*All the Voices Together* Send out the signal!

*Young Worker* [On the platform—arms raised to the dome] We shall clear the dome!

[Silence]

*Voice* [above] We in the dome!

*Voices* [below] Roll the dome clear!

*Voice* [above] Rust clogs the grooves!

*Voices* [below] Loosen the rivets!

*Voice* [above] Mightily pressing . .

*Voices* [below] Break down the girders!

*Voice* [above] Plates giving way!

*Voices* [below] Widen the gap!

*Voice* [above] Now the dome moves!

*All the Voices Together* [below] Roll the dome clear!

[A broad beam of light falls suddenly from dome to ground, and remains there erect like a shining column.

Dazzled silence—all faces raised]

*Billionaire Worker* [calling upward] Speed up the work without slacking

*Voice* [above] The wire hangs plumb

*Billionaire Worker* Make haste to be done



Voice [above] Wireless at summit, here in good order

*Billionaire Worker* Flash what I call!

Voice [above] We stand by

*Billionaire* Send out the rally hands have ceased from their work—hands have quit their slaving for destruction—hands are free to take the pressure of all hands in ours which now rest No Gas!

Voice [above] Hands have ceased their work—hands have quit their slaving for destruction—hands are free to take the pressure of all hands in ours which now rest No Gas!

*All the Voices Together* [below] No Gas!

*Billionaire Worker* Stand by for the answer!

*Voices* [below] Tell us the answer!

[Silence]

Voice [above] Answer fails!

[Silence]

*Billionaire Worker* Send a new call Tumult in blood subsided—fever fell cool—sight came to eyes that look up to greet you—shift-changing turned to abidance of being—No Gas!

*All the Voices Together* [below] No Gas!

*Billionaire Worker* Watch for the answer!

*Voices upon Voices* [below] Call down the answer!

*Billionaire Worker* Keep good watch for the answer!

[Silence]

Voice [above] Answer fails!

[Silence]

*Billionaire Worker* Urge a reply Land melted into land—frontiers into the all—the farthest are neighbours—joining with you we disperse among you, divided in oneness, one in division No Gas!

Voice [above, repeating] Land melted into land—frontiers into the all—the farthest are neighbours—joining with you we disperse among you, divided in oneness, one in division—No Gas!

*All the Voices Together* [below] No Gas!

*Billionaire Worker* Take the answer right!

*All the Voices Together* [below] Shout us the answer!

*Billionaire Worker* Take it up accurately to the last syllable

[Silence]

Voice [above] Answer fails!

[Dead silence]

Voice [from farthest rim of the crowd] Strangers!

*Voices upon Voices* The Yellow Ones!

*All the Voices Together* The Enemy!

[They fall back, making way for seven FIGURES IN YELLOW who pass between them into the centre of the hall BILLIONAIRE WORKER staggers from the platform]

*First Figure in Yellow* A hitch in the reckoning A rift in the game Yours threw the cards down, we overtrumped Enter our losses into your books [Silence] The power of the gas you produce will serve our needs Your work shall pay your debt but never liquidate it Gas is our fuel [Silence] The works pass from your disposal to our commands We scrap the schedule of your sharings Proceeds shall concentrate out of your many hands into our few—wages for you in the minimum measure for maintenance of strength [Silence] From this hour these works resume the production of gas You entered this hall as a crowd, you leave it as shifts—back to your service, shift succeeding shift We are the users of gas and demand it—the Chief Engineer is the maker of gas and shall answer to us [CHIEF ENGINEER comes] The Chief Engineer stands in power over you to order and punish [Silence To the CHIEF ENGINEER] Set the hall to rights

*Chief Engineer* [calls upwards] Roll the dome shut [The sunlight diminishes and is gone] Set up the tables [With noiseless and rapid obedience tables are reached over the heads of the crowd and set up in the centre] Stretch the wires [Swiftly, dully, wires are stretched from where they hang perpendicular from the dome diagonally to the tables as before] Recharge the lamps [Dusty light-beams from arc-lamps] To the shops, forward! [Wordless melting away towards the edge of the hall—vanishment]

[Six FIGURES IN YELLOW sit down at the tables FIRST FIGURE IN YELLOW arranges the plugs at the switch-board. CHIEF ENGINEER waits]

*First Figure in Yellow* [to the CHIEF ENGINEER] Gas! [CHIEF ENGINEER off]

### ACT THREE

*Cement hall* Dusty light beams from arc-lamp At the tables the seven FIGURES IN YELLOW Silence

*Second Figure in Yellow* [at red pane] Report



from requisitions headquarters—two quotas more required for third district

[Pane dark]

*First Figure in Yellow* [switches red plug]

*Fifth Figure in Yellow* [at green pane] Report from third works. Production one lot below contract

[Pane dark]

*First Figure in Yellow* [switches green plug]

*Third Figure in Yellow* [at red pane] Report from requisitions headquarters. Three quotas more required for second district

[Pane dark]

*First Figure in Yellow* [switches red plug]

*Sixth Figure in Yellow* [at green pane] Report from second works. Production one lot below contract

[Pane dark]

*First Figure in Yellow* [switches green plug]

*Fourth Figure in Yellow* [at red pane] Report from requisitions headquarters. Four quotas more required for first district

[Pane dark]

*First Figure in Yellow* [switches red plug]

*Seventh Figure in Yellow* [at green pane] Report from first works. Production two lots under contract

[Pane dark]

*First Figure in Yellow* [switches green plug]

[Silence]

*Second Figure in Yellow* [at red pane] Report from requisitions headquarters. Five quotas more required for third district

[Pane dark]

*First Figure in Yellow* [switches red plug]

*Fifth Figure in Yellow* [at green pane] Report from third works. Production six lots under contract

[Pane dark]

*First Figure in Yellow* [switches green plug]

*Third Figure in Yellow* [at red pane] Report from requisitions headquarters. Eight quotas more required for second district

[Pane dark]

*First Figure in Yellow* [switches red plug]

*Sixth Figure in Yellow* [at green pane] Report from second works. Production ten lots under contract

[Pane dark]

*First Figure in Yellow* [switches green plug]

*Fourth Figure in Yellow* [at red pane] Report from requisitions headquarters. Eleven quotas more required for first district

[Pane dark]

*First Figure in Yellow* [switches red plug]

*Seventh Figure in Yellow* [at green pane] Report from first works. Production twelve lots under contract

[Pane dark]

*First Figure in Yellow* [springs up—telephones]. The Chief Engineer! [CHIEF EN-

GINEER comes—without haste] Check-up stations, verify decreased production of gas. Is defaults against *Must* by twelve lots

*Chief Engineer* [calmly] Are you astonished?

*First Figure in Yellow.* Does personal opinion enter?

*Chief Engineer* [shrugging shoulders]. If you can deny yourself

*First Figure in Yellow.* Automaton as all are here

*Chief Engineer* The automata in the shops are moving fast with accessory sounds

*First Figure in Yellow* Buzzing what?

*Chief Engineer* "Not for me"

*First Figure in Yellow* Meaning?

*Chief Engineer.* This hand lifting lever—not for me. This foot pressing switch-pedal—not for me. These eyes watching pressure-gauge—not for me

*First Figure in Yellow.* Do you know your responsibility?

*Chief Engineer.* Gas

*First Figure in Yellow* You will be held to account for every minus in delivery

*Chief Engineer* [peculiarly] I am prepared—for the reckoning

*First Figure in Yellow.* You applied your powers?

*Chief Engineer* [as before] Not yet

*First Figure in Yellow* You inflicted no punishments?

*Chief Engineer* Upon whom?

*First Figure in Yellow* The hand that falters at the lever—the foot that misses the switch-pedal—the eyes that blink before the pressure-gauge

*Chief Engineer* And take every man, woman and child off the shift

*First Figure in Yellow* All resisting?

*Chief Engineer* We weaken from shift to shift

*First Figure in Yellow* Then what next?

*Chief Engineer* Gas!

*First Figure in Yellow* Why did you not flog the first that flagged?

*Chief Engineer* No

*First Figure in Yellow* Did you doubt its spread, having begun?

*Chief Engineer* No

*First Figure in Yellow* Why did you conceal these occurrences?

*Chief Engineer* I did so

*First Figure in Yellow* Are you supporting the revolt?

*Chief Engineer* With all my power  
*Fifth Figure in Yellow* [at green pane] Re-  
 port from third works Production .

*Chief Engineer* [triumphantly] Stopped!  
*Sixth Figure in Yellow* [at green pane] Re-  
 port from first works Production . . .

*Chief Engineer* Stopped!

[The FIGURES IN YELLOW leave their  
 tables]

*First Figure in Yellow* Who . . . ?

*Chief Engineer* My orders! As I left to  
 come here With my power behind them,  
 conferred by yourself The obedient obey  
 No more hands lifting levers—for others No  
 more feet pressing switch-pedals—for others  
 No more eyes watching pressure-gauges—for  
 others Hand falls, fist clenches against you  
 —foot withdraws, poises to run against you—  
 eyes turn away, dart glances against you  
 Gas for us—gas against you!

*First Figure in Yellow* Do you overlook  
 the consequences?

*Chief Engineer* None for us.

*First Figure in Yellow* Batteries surround  
 the works

*Chief Engineer.* In triple circle.

*First Figure in Yellow* Primed for the first  
 sign of rebellion.

*Chief Engineer* Rebellion rages!

*First Figure in Yellow* The works to the  
 last man, into the dust with one volley

*Chief Engineer* Are you sure?

*First Figure in Yellow* We await your re-  
 port of resumption of work within minimum  
 delay [He signs to the FIGURES IN YELLOW—  
 they leave together]

*Chief Engineer* [at front table—telephones]  
 Leave all shops—meeting in the hall

[Crowd entrance—showing accumulation  
 towards centre—full hall]

*Voice* [at last—shrill, frightened] Who has  
 turned us off?

*Chief Engineer* Those who fill this place  
 with crowding pressure to the limit of its  
 walls. Those who left lever, switch-block, and  
 gauge-glass in the lurch. Those who were  
 self-silence and will now be freemen-voice

*Voices upon Voices* Who has turned us off?

*Chief Engineer* Those whose hands double  
 to fists defying Those whose feet rush to the  
 attack. Those whose eyes take in the measure  
 of the slave-master

*All the Voices Together.* Who has turned  
 us off?

*Chief Engineer* Your command is your

destiny Your word is your law. Yesterday,  
 rented slaves—masters today

[Silence]

*Voice* What of us?

*Chief Engineer* Release from debt and  
 deeper debt Backs pull straight after burden  
 and yoke Strangling compulsion relaxed

*Voices upon Voices* What of us?

*Chief Engineer* Up from the knees Weak-  
 ness grows strong Fear sours to fight.

*All the Voices Together* What of us?

*Chief Engineer* Unleash the slinking rage  
 in you Unleash the hatred that cringed in  
 you Unleash the poison that oozed in you  
 Repay!

*Voices* Have we power?

*Chief Engineer* Pushed from shadow into  
 light Purple for your rags Nothingness  
 raised to affluence

*Voices upon Voices* Have we power?

*Chief Engineer* Beyond all measure No  
 weapon can strike with the force of your arms  
 raised to strike No shot is deadlier than the  
 breath of your lungs You are on the march,  
 conquerors, before ever you reach the field

*All the Voices Together* Have we power?

*Chief Engineer* The battle is yours without  
 the loss of a knuckle-joint In less than half  
 a day, the day is yours Where is the means  
 to victory more terrible than yours? Poison  
 Gas! [He takes a red globe out of his pocket.]  
 My discovery for you Beasts of burden you,  
 and I too—and the shame devoured me for  
 all of us Not for a second did I lose sight of  
 my goal, to destroy our whip-masters—at  
 last I reached it—the formula that frees  
 hatred and shame were its ingredients In a  
 skin-thin glass—victory that swells and eats  
 away flesh from legs, bleaches stiff bones.  
 [Silence] There is no looking on the power  
 of annihilation with impunity Reason leaves,  
 and madness enters the brain of the beholder  
 who sees living men turned to bleached  
 skeletons before his very eyes Resistance  
 screams itself down out of the mouth of  
 the first inquisitive one who rashly rushes  
 hither, crying out world's end and massacre!  
 [Silence] This is the decisive hour for time  
 everlasting—decide, and you are the victors  
 Set the example—hurl your ball from the top  
 of the dome—aim at the lines waiting to aim  
 at you—meet onslaught with onslaught—  
 hurl your balls!

*Voices* Poison gas

*Chief Engineer* Be avengers!

*Voices upon Voices* Poison gas!  
*Chief Engineer* Be fighters!  
*All the Voices Together* Poison gas!  
*Chief Engineer* Be conquerors!

*[Young workers crowd on to the steps of the platform—hands out-stretched for the globe BILLIONAIRE WORKER pushes his way through them past their uplifted arms]*

*Billionaire Worker* Don't touch that globe Reject that temptation Do not destroy your power with the hurling of the balls

*Voices* The Billionaire Worker!

*Billionaire Worker* Do not follow those orders Do not aim in the dark Do no mean and paltry trafficking

*Voices upon Voices* The Billionaire Worker!

*Billionaire Worker* Protect your privileges Know your means of conquest Build upon rock the house that shall stand unshaken forever

*All the Voices Together.* The Billionaire Worker!

*[The young workers have fallen away from the steps The BILLIONAIRE WORKER ascends further]*

*Billionaire Worker* Spread your sight to span the new that began in the old Beginning meets end, new truth, truth revealed All ages debouch in your age, endlessly repeating Your need is not discovery—your fulfillment not experiment and proof Your lot is in the wheel thousands of years revolving—purifying your decisions with sorting and sorting *[Silence]* No road of many turnings leads to perfection as the street that is opening for you now Yours the gain—your tables ran over Riches were piled up all round you *[Silence]* But it scattered away like sand children play with on the beach The rising of a wind retards nothing—you cannot stop springs black with the birth of earth-disturbing tempest Momentum of release met you and flung you to the ground A deep fall The tower of your own height buried you *[Silence]* You were reckoned great before—you shall be greater now—as martyrs *[Silence]* The unslaked passion left you—day-labour Endlessly satiating the nameless other replaced it Not tables and shifts and dismissals feed it, but its own coin that pays never more, never less *[Silence]* Pay with the counterfeit they demand of you

Cheat the cheater with his own spurious currency's dull ring Your work brings nothing to maturity—do it Their currency is falling—convert it Martyrs in the works—freemen in yourselves *[Silence]* Build up the kingdom Not with the burden of new discoveries—distance does not intimidate Hard upon the ungrudging promise crowd the first-fruits—law long and long since, piled on law—preparations ripe, time out of mind—use your existence to which all reverts—build to the last stronghold the kingdom which is in yourselves *[Silence The BILLIONAIRE WORKER on the platform]* You shall dare what generations and generations have bred in you You exiled one of yourselves, and wisely—over green pastures he decoyed you here before me Not from outside can you protect the greatness within you—you cannot pen it in with colony and colony—your kingdom is not of this world! *[Silence]* Face the stranger—pay him his interest—leave him his wage—shovel him his gains—suffer his demands—ignore the spine bleeding in your skin—Be your Kingdom! *[Breathing silence]*

*Chief Engineer* *[at the foot of the steps]* Treachery spits in your faces in that cry—do you not hear it? Have you no tongues to downcry it? Have you forgotten the pledge of your surging voices raised to me?

*Billionaire Worker* Deliver yourselves within yourselves!

*Chief Engineer* What will remain to you once dispossessed? Your necks for the bloody spurring of the lash—yourselves for defilement, laughing you to scorn—a cattle-team misused And drudgery for ever, a whimgin cranking you eternally round and round, wearing and bearing you down To be racked with chastisement when your limbs break under you Those are your terms of hire

*Billionaire Worker* Let the kingdom arise, which shall reign in you almighty

*Chief Engineer* Let the power fall low which exploits you now Yours the gain—without the bending of a finger Gas the magician works for you. You use your victory as the victors of yesterday showed you to

*Billionaire Worker* Deliver yourselves in the endurance of serfdom which cannot touch the kingdom within

*Chief Engineer* Think of the tribute that will fall to you No place on the world's globe but will be your debtor, no ships hold but will carry freight for you, no bridge but

whose arch bears supplies for you, no wire but  
flashes your commands from pole to pole  
Your will is world-empire

*Billionaire Worker* The voice speaks again  
—the light that tempts and dazzles shines out  
again

*Chief Engineer* Give your purpose voice  
that it may bind you implacably

*Billionaire Worker* Decide for the way of  
humility

*Chief Engineer* Strike a bargain with your  
term and the bombardment!

*Billionaire Worker* Return to your places,  
perform your services—they are the lesser  
part

*Chief Engineer* [on the platform] Take aim  
and cast the single throw which gives you  
victory

*Billionaire Worker* Return!

*Chief Engineer* [holding the globe high]  
Dominion!

*Billionaire Worker* Found the kingdom!

*Chief Engineer* Ignite the gas that kills!  
[Silence]

*Billionaire Worker* Be silent and listen  
how heaven and earth both hold their breath  
before your decision which shall seal the fate  
of the world [Silence]

*Voices* The gas that kills!

*Voices upon Voices* The gas that kills!

*All the Voices Together* The gas that kills!

*Chief Engineer* [victorious] Ours the  
power! Ours the world! Aim the bomb—  
hasten the throw—they shall not shoot!  
Who volunteers?

*Young Workers* [storming on to the plat-  
form] I!

*Chief Engineer* Have a care of this ball—  
it is dangerous

*Billionaire Worker* [restraining the young  
workers—turning to the CHIEF ENGINEER] I  
am the rightful one—I have priority

*All the Voices Together* The Billionaire  
Worker! [The CHIEF ENGINEER gives him the  
bomb]

*Billionaire Worker* [on the platform—bomb  
upraised over his head] My blood's blood  
beat for our conversion My thirst slaked  
itself at the thirst of mother and mother's  
father Our voices might have waked the  
wilderness—Our voices could wake the wilder-  
ness—men's ears are deaf I am vindicated!  
I can fulfill! [He throws the bomb into the air—  
it falls and smashes with a frail clatter Silence]

*Chief Engineer* The gas that kills

*All the Voices* The gas that kills

[Paralysed silence Bombardment thun-  
ders from without Darkness, and  
vast crash of collapsing walls Si-  
lence Light comes gradually The  
hall a shambles of cement slabs lying  
on top of one another like broken  
gravestones—the skeletons of the work-  
ers already bleached jut out amongst  
them FIGURE IN YELLOW—hel-  
meted, telephone at head, hastens to-  
wards the wreckage, unrolling wire]

*Figure in Yellow* [stops—stares wildly—  
shrieks into telephone] Report of effect of  
bombardment—Turn your bullets on your-  
selves—exterminate yourselves—the dead  
crowd out of their graves—day of judgment—  
*dies irae—solvet—in favill*

[His shot shatters the rest In the mast-  
grey distance sheaves of flaming bombs  
bursting together—wild in self-extermi-  
nation]

THE END



R. U. R.

By KAREL CAPEK

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## KAREL CAPEK AND HIS PLAYS

KAREL CAPEK, the author of *R U R*, was born in northern Bohemia on January 9 1890, and was educated at the universities of Prague, Berlin, and Paris. He began his career in literature by writing sketches and stories in collaboration with his brother Joseph, and until his death in 1938 continued to produce remarkable short stories and sketches of travel that have placed him among the most gifted of Czecho-Slovakian writers. After a period spent in journalism, he became intensely interested in the theatre, and for a time assisted M. Jaroslav Kvapil in directing the Municipal Theatre of Vinohradz. He confesses that, from the first, he felt an "unappeasable desire of intellectual adventure" and "a passionate need of search." This intellectual adventurousness and passionate curiosity inspired his plays and help to explain their characteristic qualities. His first play, *The Brigand*, was published in 1920. With the production of *R U R* his reputation was established as the foremost dramatist of Czecho-Slovakia. Following *R U R* came *The Life of the Insects*, written in collaboration with his brother Joseph, which was produced in New York under the title of *The World We Live In*. This curious and brilliant social satire was suggested by J. H. Fabre's famous scientific work *Social Life in the Insect World*, and presents human beings in the guise of various kinds of insects, with satire upon human follies and vices. Its third act, at least, must be considered as among the most striking and effective of its kind in all modern drama. Capek's next play, *The Makropoulos Case* (published and produced in America as *The Makropoulos Secret*) is a study of the possible effects of longevity upon an individual whose life has been artificially prolonged to the age of over three hundred years. Expressed, like *R U R*, in terms of melodrama, the play none the less embodies a serious ethical concept, presented with excellent theatrical effect.

It may very well be that *R U R*, with its picture of mechanical men doing the work of the world and then turning upon their creators, was suggested by the old Jewish legend current in Prague—that of the "Golem," a man made by artifice, a kind of Frankenstein's monster without a soul, who turns Berserk and works havoc, until he is finally destroyed by his maker. However inspired or suggested, the play is perhaps the most remarkable example of the union of melodrama and social criticism. In its essence it is a devastating arraignment of modern mechanistic civilization. In mere form, in technique, it is unquestionably melodrama—its persons mere types, its situations, including its superb "curtains", essentially melodramatic. Perhaps in no other play is there so perfect a fusion of two such seemingly diverse qualities, for there can be no question of the timely importance and arresting quality of the idea, and certainly as little question as to the magnificently effective, though purely theatrical, quality of the plot.

*R U R* was produced first at the National Theatre, Prague, on January 26, 1921. Its success was immediate and pronounced, so great indeed that its fame quickly became international, and it was soon produced in Vienna, Berlin, Paris, London, New York and other capitals. The first production in America was made in New York by the Theatre Guild on October 9, 1922. The play has continued a favorite in the professional theatre and has since been repeatedly produced by the "little theatres" of the United States.



## CHARACTERS

HARRY DOMIN—*General Manager of Rossum's Universal Robots*

SULLA—*A Robotess*

MARIUS—*A Robot*

HELENA GLORY

DR GALL—*Head of the Physiological and Experimental Department of R U R*

MR FABRY—*Engineer General, Technical Controller of R U R*

DR HALLEMEIER—*Head of the Institute for Psychological Training of Robots*

MR ALQUIST—*Architect, Head of the Works Department of R U R*

CONSUL BUSMAN—*General Business Manager of R U R*

NANA

RADIUS—*A Robot*

HELENA—*A Robotess*

PRIMUS—*A Robot*

A SERVANT

FIRST ROBOT

SECOND ROBOT

THIRD ROBOT

*The action takes place on an island some time in the future*

# R. U. R.

## ACT ONE

*Central office of the factory of Rossum's Universal Robots Entrance on the right The windows on the front wall look out on the rows of factory chimneys On the left more managing departments DOMIN is sitting in the revolving chair at a large American writing table On the left-hand wall large maps showing steamship and railroad routes On the right-hand wall are fastened printed placards ("Robot's Cheapest Labor," etc) In contrast to these wall fittings, the floor is covered with a splendid Turkish carpet, a sofa, leather armchair, and filing cabinets At a desk near the windows SULLA is typing letters*

*Domin* [dictating] Ready?

*Sulla* Yes

*Domin* To E M McVicker and Co., Southampton, England "We undertake no guarantee for goods damaged in transit As soon as the consignment was taken on board we drew your captain's attention to the fact that the vessel was unsuitable for the transport of Robots, and we are therefore not responsible for spoiled freight We beg to remain for Rossum's Universal Robots Yours truly" [*SULLA, who has sat motionless during dictation, now types rapidly for a few seconds, then stops, withdrawing the completed letter*] Ready?

*Sulla* Yes

*Domin* Another letter To the E B Huyson Agency, New York, U S A "We beg to acknowledge receipt of order for five thousand Robots As you are sending your own vessel, please dispatch as cargo equal quantities of soft and hard coal for R U R, the same to be credited as part payment of the amount due to us We beg to remain, for Rossum's Universal Robots. Yours truly" [*SULLA repeats the rapid typing*] Ready?

*Sulla* Yes

*Domin* Another letter "Friedrichswerks, Hamburg, Germany We beg to acknowledge receipt of order for fifteen thou-

sand Robots" [*Telephone rings*] Hello! This is the Central Office Yes Certainly Well, send them a wire Good [*Hangs up telephone*] Where did I leave off?

*Sulla* "We beg to acknowledge receipt of order for fifteen thousand Robots"

*Domin* Fifteen thousand R Fifteen thousand R [*Enter MARIUS*]

*Domin* Well, what is it?

*Marius* There's a lady, sir, asking to see you

*Domin* A lady? Who is she?

*Marius* I don't know, sir She brings this card of introduction

*Domin* [*Reads the card*] Ah, from President Glory Ask her to come in

*Marius* Please step this way

[*Enter HELENA GLORY*]

[*Exit MARIUS*]

*Helena* How do you do?

*Domin* How do you do [*Standing up*] What can I do for you?

*Helena*. You are Mr Domin, the General Manager

*Domin* I am

*Helena* I have come—

*Domin* With President Glory's card. That is quite sufficient

*Helena* President Glory is my father. I am Helena Glory

*Domin* Miss Glory, this is such a great honor for us to be allowed to welcome our great President's daughter, that—

*Helena* That you can't show me the door?

*Domin* Please sit down Sulla, you may go

[*Exit SULLA*]

*Domin* [*Sitting down*] How can I be of service to you, Miss Glory?

*Helena* I have come—

*Domin* To have a look at our famous works where people are manufactured Like all visitors Well, there is no objection

*Helena* I thought it was forbidden to—

*Domin* To enter the factory Yes, of course Everybody comes here with someone's visiting card, Miss Glory

*Helena* And you show them—

*Domin* Only certain things The manufacture of artificial people is a secret process

*Helena* If you only knew how enormously that—

*Domin* Interests me Europe's talking about nothing else

*Helena* Why don't you let me finish speaking?

*Domin* I beg your pardon Did you want to say something different?

*Helena* I only wanted to ask—

*Domin* Whether I could make a special exception in your case and show you our factory Why, certainly, Miss Glory

*Helena* How do you know I wanted to say that?

*Domin* They all do But we shall consider it a special honor to show you more than we do the rest

*Helena* Thank you

*Domin* But you must agree not to divulge the least . . .

*Helena* [*standing up and giving him her hand*] My word of honor

*Domin* Thank you Won't you raise your veil?

*Helena* Of course You want to see whether I'm a spy or not. I beg your pardon.

*Domin* What is it?

*Helena* Would you mind releasing my hand?

*Domin* [*releasing it*] I beg your pardon

*Helena* [*raising her veil*] How cautious you have to be here, don't you?

*Domin* [*observing her with deep interest*] Hm, of course—we—that is—

*Helena* But what is it? What's the matter?

*Domin* I'm remarkably pleased. Did you have a pleasant crossing?

*Helena* Yes

*Domin* No difficulty?

*Helena* Why?

*Domin* What I mean to say is—you're so young

*Helena*. May we go straight into the factory?

*Domin* Yes Twenty-two, I think

*Helena* Twenty-two what?

*Domin* Years

*Helena* Twenty-one Why do you want to know?

*Domin* Because—as—[*with enthusiasm*] you will make a long stay, won't you?

*Helena* That depends on how much of the factory you show me

*Domin* Oh, hang the factory. Oh, no, no, you shall see everything, Miss Glory. Indeed you shall Won't you sit down?

*Helena* [*crossing to couch and sitting*]. Thank you

*Domin* But first would you like to hear the story of the invention?

*Helena* Yes, indeed

*Domin* [*observes HELENA with rapture and reels off rapidly*]

It was in the year 1920 that old Rossum, the great physiologist, who was then quite a young scientist, took himself to this distant island for the purpose of studying the ocean fauna, full stop On this occasion he attempted by chemical synthesis to imitate the living matter known as protoplasm until he suddenly discovered a substance which behaved exactly like living matter although its chemical composition was different That was in the year of 1932, exactly four hundred years after the discovery of America Whew!

*Helena* Do you know that by heart?

*Domin* Yes You see physiology is not in my line Shall I go on?

*Helena* Yes, please

*Domin* And then, Miss Glory, old Rossum wrote the following among his chemical specimens "Nature has found only one method of organizing living matter There is, however, another method, more simple, flexible and rapid, which has not yet occurred to nature at all This second process by which life can be developed was discovered by me to-day" Now imagine him, Miss Glory, writing those wonderful words over some colloidal mess that a dog wouldn't look at Imagine him sitting over a test tube, and thinking how the whole tree of life would grow from it, how all animals would proceed from it, beginning with some sort of beetle and ending with a man A man of different substance from us Miss Glory, that was a tremendous moment.

*Helena* Well?

*Domin* Now, the thing was how to get the life out of the test tubes, and hasten development and form organs, bones and nerves, and so on, and find such substances

as catalytics, enzymes, hormones, and so forth, in short—you understand?

*Helena* Not much, I'm afraid

*Domin* Never mind You see with the help of his tinctures he could make whatever he wanted He could have produced a Medusa with the brain of a Socrates or a worm fifty yards long But being without a grain of humor, he took it into his head to make a vertebrate or perhaps a man This artificial living matter of his had a raging thirst for life It didn't mind being sewn or mixed together That couldn't be done with natural albumen. And that's how he set about it

*Helena* About what?

*Domin* About imitating nature First of all he tried making an artificial dog That took him several years and resulted in a sort of stunted calf which died in a few days I'll show it to you in the museum And then old Rossum started on the manufacture of man

*Helena* And I must divulge this to nobody?

*Domin* To nobody in the world

*Helena* What a pity that it's to be found in all the school books of both Europe and America

*Domin* Yes But do you know what isn't in the school books? That old Rossum was mad Seriously, Miss Glory, you must keep this to yourself The old crank wanted to actually make people

*Helena* But you do make people

*Domin* Approximately, Miss Glory But old Rossum meant it literally He wanted to become a sort of scientific substitute for God He was a fearful materialist, and that's why he did it all His sole purpose was nothing more nor less than to prove that God was no longer necessary Do you now anything about anatomy?

*Helena* Very little

*Domin* Neither do I Well, he then decided to manufacture everything as in the human body I'll show you in the museum the bungling attempt it took him ten years to produce It was to have been a man, but it lived for three days only Then up came young Rossum, an engineer He was a wonderful fellow, Miss Glory When he saw what a mess of it the old man was making, he said "It's absurd to spend ten years making a man If you can't make

him quicker than nature, you might as well shut up shop" Then he set about learning anatomy himself

*Helena* There's nothing about that in the school books

*Domin* No The school books are full of paid advertisements, and rubbish at that What the school books say about the united efforts of the two great Rossums is all a fairy tale They used to have dreadful rows The old atheist hadn't the slightest conception of industrial matters, and the end of it was that young Rossum shut him up in some laboratory or other and let him fritter the time away with his monstrosities, while he himself started on the business from an engineer's point of view Old Rossum cursed him and before he died he managed to blotch up two physiological horrors Then one day they found him dead in the laboratory And that's his whole story

*Helena* And what about the young man?

*Domin* Well, any one who has looked into human anatomy will have seen at once that man is too complicated, and that a good engineer could make him more simply So young Rossum began to overhaul anatomy and tried to see what could be left out or simplified In short—but this isn't boring you, Miss Glory?

*Helena* No indeed You're—it's awfully interesting

*Domin* So young Rossum said to himself "A man is something that feels happy, plays the piano, likes going for a walk, and in fact, wants to do a whole lot of things that are really unnecessary"

*Helena* Oh

*Domin* That are unnecessary when he wants, let us say, to weave or count Do you play the piano?

*Helena* Yes

*Domin* That's good But a working machine must not play the piano, must not feel happy, must not do a whole lot of other things A gasoline motor must not have tassels or ornaments, Miss Glory And to manufacture artificial workers is the same thing as to manufacture gasoline motors The process must be of the simplest, and the product of the best from a practical point of view What sort of worker do you think is the best from a practical point of view?

*Helena.* What?

*Domin* What sort of worker do you think is the best from a practical point of view?

*Helena.* Perhaps the one who is most honest and hardworking

*Domin* No, the one that is the cheapest. The one whose requirements are the smallest. Young Rossum invented a worker with the minimum amount of requirements. He had to simplify him. He rejected everything that did not contribute directly to the progress of work—everything that makes man more expensive. In fact, he rejected man and made the Robot. My dear Miss Glory, the Robots are not people. Mechanically they are more perfect than we are, they have an enormously developed intelligence, but they have no soul.

*Helena* How do you know they've no soul?

*Domin* Have you ever seen what a Robot looks like inside?

*Helena* No

*Domin* Very neat, very simple. Really, a beautiful piece of work. Not much in it, but everything in flawless order. The product of an engineer is technically at a higher pitch of perfection than a product of nature.

*Helena* But man is supposed to be the product of God.

*Domin* All the worse. God hasn't the least notion of modern engineering. Would you believe that young Rossum then proceeded to play at being God?

*Helena* How do you mean?

*Domin* He began to manufacture Super-Robots. Regular giants they were. He tried to make them twelve feet tall. But you wouldn't believe what a failure they were.

*Helena* A failure?

*Domin* Yes. For no reason at all their limbs used to keep snapping off. Evidently our planet is too small for giants. Now we only make Robots of normal size and of very high class human finish.

*Helena* I saw the first Robots at home. The town counsel bought them for—I mean engaged them for work.

*Domin* Bought them, dear Miss Glory. Robots are bought and sold.

*Helena* These were employed as street

sweepers. I saw them sweeping. They were so strange and quiet.

*Domin* Rossum's Universal Robot factory doesn't produce a uniform brand of Robots. We have Robots of finer and coarser grades. The best will live about twenty years. [*He rings for MARIUS*]

*Helena* Then they die?

*Domin.* Yes, they get used up.

[*Enter MARIUS*]

*Domin.* Marius, bring in samples of the Manual Labor Robot. [*Exit MARIUS*]

*Domin* I'll show you specimens of the two extremes. This first grade is comparatively inexpensive and is made in vast quantities.

[*MARIUS reenters with two Manual Labor Robots*]

*Domin* There you are; as powerful as a small tractor. Guaranteed to have average intelligence. That will do, Marius.

[*MARIUS exits with Robots*]

*Helena* They make me feel so strange.

*Domin* [*rings*] Did you see my new typist? [*He rings for SULLA*]

*Helena* I didn't notice her.

[*Enter SULLA*]

*Domin* Sulla, let Miss Glory see you.

*Helena* So pleased to meet you. You must find it terribly dull in this out-of-the-way spot, don't you?

*Sulla* I don't know, Miss Glory.

*Helena* Where do you come from?

*Sulla* From the factory.

*Helena* Oh, you were born there?

*Sulla* I was made there.

*Helena* What?

*Domin* [*laughing*]. Sulla is a Robot, best grade.

*Helena* Oh, I beg your pardon.

*Domin* Sulla isn't angry. See, Miss Glory, the kind of skin we make. [*Feels the skin on SULLA's face*] Feel her face.

*Helena* Oh, no, no.

*Domin* You wouldn't know that she's made of different material from us, would you? Turn round, Sulla.

*Helena* Oh, stop, stop.

*Domin* Talk to Miss Glory, Sulla.

*Sulla* Please sit down. [*HELENA sits*] Did you have a pleasant crossing?

*Helena* Oh, yes, certainly.

*Sulla* Don't go back on the *Amelia*, Miss Glory. The barometer is falling steadily.

Wait for the *Pennsylvania* That's a good, powerful vessel

*Domin* What's its speed?

*Sulla* Twenty knots Fifty thousand tons One of the latest vessels, Miss Glory.

*Helena* Thank you

*Sulla* A crew of fifteen hundred, Captain Harpy, eight boilers——

*Domin* That'll do, Sulla Now show us your knowledge of French

*Helena* You know French?

*Sulla* I know four languages I can write Dear Sir, Monsieur, Geehrter Herr, Cteny pane

*Helena* [jumping up] Oh, that's absurd! Sulla isn't a Robot Sulla is a girl like me Sulla, this is outrageous! Why do you take part in such a hoax?

*Sulla* I am a Robot

*Helena* No, no, you are not telling the truth I know they've forced you to do it for an advertisement Sulla, you are a girl like me, aren't you?

*Domin* I'm sorry, Miss Glory. Sulla is a Robot

*Helena* It's a lie!

*Domin* What? [Rings] Excuse me, Miss Glory, then I must convince you

[Enter MARIUS]

*Domin* Marius, take Sulla into the dissecting room, and tell them to open her up at once

*Helena* Where?

*Domin* Into the dissecting room When they've cut her open, you can go and have a look.

*Helena* No, no!

*Domin* Excuse me, you spoke of hes

*Helena* You wouldn't have her killed?

*Domin* You can't kill machines

*Helena* Don't be afraid, Sulla, I won't let you go Tell me, my dear, are they always so cruel to you? You mustn't put up with it, Sulla You mustn't

*Sulla* I am a Robot

*Helena* That doesn't matter Robots are just as good as we are Sulla, you wouldn't let yourself be cut to pieces?

*Sulla* Yes

*Helena* Oh, you're not afraid of death, then?

*Sulla* I cannot tell, Miss Glory.

*Helena* Do you know what would happen to you in there?

*Sulla* Yes, I should cease to move

*Helena* How dreadful!

*Domin* Marius, tell Miss Glory what you are

*Marius* Marius, the Robot

*Domin* Would you take Sulla into the dissecting room?

*Marius* Yes

*Domin* Would you be sorry for her?

*Marius* I cannot tell

*Domin* What would happen to her?

*Marius* She would cease to move They would put her into the stamping mill

*Domin* That is death, Marius Aren't you afraid of death?

*Marius* No

*Domin* You see, Miss Glory, the Robots have no interest in life They have no enjoyments They are less than so much grass

*Helena* Oh, stop Send them away

*Domin* Marius, Sulla, you may go

[Exit SULLA and MARIUS]

*Helena* How terrible! It's outrageous what you are doing

*Domin* Why outrageous?

*Helena* I don't know, but it is Why do you call her Sulla?

*Domin* Isn't it a nice name?

*Helena* It's a man's name Sulla was a Roman general

*Domin* Oh, we thought that Marius and Sulla were lovers

*Helena* Marius and Sulla were generals and fought against each other in the year—I've forgotten now.

*Domin* Come here to the window

*Helena* What?

*Domin* Come here What do you see?

*Helena* Bricklayers

*Domin* Robots All our work people are Robots And down there, can you see anything?

*Helena* Some sort of office

*Domin* A counting house And in it——

*Helena* A lot of officials

*Domin* Robots All our officials are Robots And when you see the factory——  
[Factory whistle blows]

*Domin* Noon We have to blow the whistle because the Robots don't know when to stop work In two hours I will show you the kneading trough.

*Helena* Kneading trough?

*Domin* The pestle for beating up the paste In each one we mix the ingredients

for a thousand Robots at one operation. Then there are the vats for the preparation of liver, brains, and so on. Then you will see the bone factory. After that I'll show you the spinning mill.

*Helena* Spinning mill?

*Domin* Yes. For weaving nerves and veins. Miles and miles of digestive tubes pass through it at a time.

*Helena* Mayn't we talk about something else?

*Domin* Perhaps it would be better. There's only a handful of us among a hundred thousand Robots, and not one woman. We talk about nothing but the factory all day, every day. It's just as if we were under a curse, Miss Glory.

*Helena* I'm sorry I said that you were lying. *[A knock at the door]*

*Domin* Come in.

*[From the right enter MR FABRY, DR. GALL, DR HALLEMEIER, MR ALQUIST]*

*Dr Gall* I beg your pardon, I hope we don't intrude.

*Domin* Come in. Miss Glory, here are Alquist, Fabry, Gall, Hallemeier. This is President Glory's daughter.

*Helena* How do you do?

*Fabry* We had no idea —

*Dr. Gall* Highly honored, I'm sure —

*Alquist* Welcome, Miss Glory.

*[BUSMAN rushes in from the right]*

*Busman* Hello, what's up?

*Domin* Come in, Busman. This is Busman, Miss Glory. This is President Glory's daughter.

*Busman* By jove, that's fine! Miss Glory, may we send a cablegram to the papers about your arrival?

*Helena* No, no, please don't.

*Domin* Sit down, please, Miss Glory.

*Busman*. Allow me —

*[Dragging up armchairs]*

*Dr Gall* Please —

*Fabry* Excuse me —

*Alquist* What sort of a crossing did you have?

*Dr Gall* Are you going to stay long?

*Fabry* What do you think of the factory, Miss Glory?

*Hallemeier*. Did you come over on the *Amelia*?

*Domin*. Be quiet and let Miss Glory speak.

*Helena* *[to DOMIN]* What am I to speak to them about?

*Domin* Anything you like.

*Helena* Shall . . . may I speak quite frankly?

*Domin* Why, of course.

*Helena* *[wavering, then in desperate resolution]* Tell me, doesn't it ever distress you the way you are treated?

*Fabry* By whom, may I ask?

*Helena* Why, everybody.

*Alquist* Treated?

*Dr Gall* What makes you think —?

*Helena* Don't you feel that you might be living a better life?

*Dr Gall* Well, that depends on what you mean, Miss Glory.

*Helena* I mean that it's perfectly outrageous. It's terrible. *[Standing up]* The whole of Europe is talking about the way you're being treated. That's why I came here, to see for myself, and it's a thousand times worse than could have been imagined. How can you put up with it?

*Alquist*. Put up with what?

*Helena*. Good heavens, you are living creatures, just like us, like the whole of Europe, like the whole world. It's disgraceful that you must live like this.

*Busman* Good gracious, Miss Glory.

*Fabry* Well, she's not far wrong. We live here just like red Indians.

*Helena*. Worse than red Indians. May I, oh, may I call you brothers?

*Busman* Why not?

*Helena* Brothers, I have not come here as the President's daughter. I have come on behalf of the Humanity League. Brothers, the Humanity League now has over two hundred thousand members. Two hundred thousand people are on your side, and offer you their help.

*Busman* Two hundred thousand people! Miss Glory, that's a tidy lot. Not bad.

*Fabry* I'm always telling you there's nothing like good old Europe. You see, they've not forgotten us. They're offering us help.

*Dr Gall* What help? A theatre, for instance?

*Hallemeier* An orchestra?

*Helena* More than that.

*Alquist* Just you?

*Helena* Oh, never mind about me I'll stay as long as it is necessary

*Busman* By jove, that's good

*Alquist* Domin, I'm going to get the best room ready for Miss Glory

*Domin* Just a minute I'm afraid that Miss Glory is of the opinion that she has been talking to Robots

*Helena* Of course

*Domin* I'm sorry These gentlemen are human beings just like us

*Helena* You're not Robots?

*Busman* Not Robots

*Hallemeier* Robots indeed!

*Dr Gall* No, thanks

*Fabry* Upon my honor, Miss Glory, we aren't Robots

*Helena* [to Domin] Then why did you tell me that all your officials are Robots?

*Domin* Yes, the officials, but not the managers Allow me, Miss Glory this is Mr Fabry, General Technical Manager of R U R, Dr Gall, Head of the Psychological and Experimental Department, Dr Hallemeier, Head of the Institute for the Psychological Training of Robots, Consul Busman, General Business Manager, and Alquist, Head of the Building Department of R U R

*Alquist* Just a boulder

*Helena* Excuse me, gentlemen, for— for— Have I done something dreadful?

*Alquist* Not at all, Miss Glory Please sit down

*Helena* I'm a stupid girl Send me back by the first ship

*Dr Gall* Not for anything in the world, Miss Glory Why should we send you back?

*Helena* Because you know I've come to disturb your Robots for you

*Domin* My dear Miss Glory, we've had close upon a hundred saviours and prophets here Every ship brings us some Missionaries, anarchists, Salvation Army, all sorts It's astonishing what a number of churches and idiots there are in the world

*Helena* And you let them speak to the Robots?

*Domin* So far we've let them all, why not? The Robots remember everything, but that's all They don't even laugh at what the people say Really, it is quite incredible If it would amuse you, Miss

Glory, I'll take you over to the Robot warehouse It holds about three hundred thousand of them

*Busman* Three hundred and forty-seven thousand

*Domin* Good! And you can say whatever you like to them You can read the Bible, recite the multiplication table, whatever you please You can even preach to them about human rights

*Helena* Oh, I think that if you were to show them a little love—

*Fabry* Impossible, Miss Glory Nothing is harder to like than a Robot

*Helena* What do you make them for, then?

*Busman* Ha, ha, ha, that's good! What are Robots made for?

*Fabry* For work, Miss Glory! One Robot can replace two and a half workmen The human machine, Miss Glory, was terribly imperfect It had to be removed sooner or later

*Busman* It was too expensive

*Fabry* It was not effective It no longer answers the requirements of modern engineering Nature has no idea of keeping pace with modern labor For example from a technical point of view, the whole of childhood is a sheer absurdity So much time lost And then again—

*Helena* Oh, no! No!

*Fabry* Pardon me But kindly tell me what is the real aim of your League—the the Humanity League

*Helena* Its real purpose is to—to protect the Robots—and—and ensure good treatment for them

*Fabry* Not a bad object, either. A machine has to be treated properly Upon my soul, I approve of that I don't like damaged articles Please, Miss Glory, enroll us all as contributing, or regular, or foundation members of your League

*Helena* No, you don't understand me What we really want is to—to liberate the Robots

*Hallemeier* How do you propose to do that?

*Helena* They are to be—to be dealt with like human beings

*Hallemeier* Aha I suppose they're to vote? To drink beer? to order us about?

*Helena* Why shouldn't they drink beer?



*Hallemeier.* Perhaps they're even to receive wages?

*Helena* Of course they are.

*Hallemeier* Fancy that, now! And what would they do with their wages, pray?

*Helena* They would buy—what they need. what pleases them

*Hallemeier* That would be very nice, Miss Glory, only there's nothing that does please the Robots Good heavens, what are they to buy? You can feed them on pineapples, straw, whatever you like It's all the same to them, they've no appetite at all They've no interest in anything, Miss Glory Why, hang it all, nobody's ever yet seen a Robot smile

*Helena* Why . . why don't you make them happier?

*Hallemeier* That wouldn't do, Miss Glory They are only workmen

*Helena* Oh, but they're so intelligent

*Hallemeier* Confoundedly so, but they're nothing else They've no will of their own No passion No soul

*Helena* No love?

*Hallemeier* Love? Rather not Robots don't love Not even themselves.

*Helena* Nor defiance?

*Hallemeier* Defiance? I don't know. Only rarely, from time to time

*Helena* What?

*Hallemeier* Nothing particular. Occasionally they seem to go off their heads Something like epilepsy, you know It's called Robot's cramp They'll suddenly sling down everything they're holding, stand still, gnash their teeth—and then they have to go into the stamping-mill It's evidently some breakdown in the mechanism

*Domin* A flaw in the works that has to be removed

*Helena* No, no, that's the soul.

*Fabry* Do you think that the soul first shows itself by a gnashing of teeth?

*Helena* Perhaps it's a sort of revolt Perhaps it's just a sign that there's a struggle within Oh, if you could infuse them with it!

*Domin* That'll be remedied, Miss Glory Dr Gall is just making some experiments—

*Dr. Gall* Not with regard to that, Domin. At present I am making pain-nerves.

*Helena* Pain-nerves?

*Dr Gall* Yes, the Robots feel practically no bodily pain. You see, young Rossum provided them with too limited a nervous system. We must introduce suffering

*Helena.* Why do you want to cause them pain?

*Dr. Gall* For industrial reasons, Miss Glory Sometimes a Robot does damage to himself because it doesn't hurt him He puts his hand into the machine, breaks his finger, smashes his head, it's all the same to him We must provide them with pain. That's an automatic protection against damage

*Helena* Will they be happier when they feel pain?

*Dr Gall* On the contrary; but they will be more perfect from a technical point of view

*Helena* Why don't you create a soul for them?

*Dr Gall* That's not in our power

*Fabry* That's not in our interest

*Busman* That would increase the cost of production Hang it all, my dear young lady, we turn them out at such a cheap rate A hundred and fifty dollars each fully dressed, and fifteen years ago they cost ten thousand. Five years ago we used to buy the clothes for them To-day we have our own weaving mill, and now we even export cloth five times cheaper than other factories What do you pay a yard for cloth, Miss Glory?

*Helena* I don't know really, I've forgotten

*Busman* Good gracious, and you want to found a Humanity League? It only costs a third now, Miss Glory All prices are to-day a third of what they were and they'll fall still lower, lower, lower, like that

*Helena* I don't understand

*Busman* Why, bless you, Miss Glory, it means that the cost of labor has fallen A Robot, food and all, costs three quarters of a cent per hour That's mighty important, you know. All factories will go pop like chestnuts if they don't at once buy Robots to lower the cost of production

*Helena* And get rid of their workmen?

*Busman* Of course But in the meantime, we've dumped five hundred thousand

tropical Robots down on the Argentine pampas to grow corn. Would you mind telling me how much you pay a pound for bread?

*Helena* I've no idea.

*Busman* Well, I'll tell you. It now costs two cents in good old Europe. A pound of bread for two cents, and the Humanity League knows nothing about it. Miss Glory, you don't realize that even that's too expensive. Why, in five years' time I'll wager—

*Helena* What?

*Busman* That the cost of everything won't be a tenth of what it is now. Why, in five years we'll be up to our ears in corn and everything else.

*Alquist* Yes, and all the workers throughout the world will be unemployed.

*Domin* Yes, Alquist, they will. Yes, Miss Glory, they will. But in ten years Rossum's Universal Robots will produce so much corn, so much cloth, so much everything, that things will be practically without price. There will be no poverty. All work will be done by living machines. Everybody will be free from worry and liberated from the degradation of labor. Everybody will live only to perfect himself.

*Helena* Will he?

*Domin* Of course. It's bound to happen. But then the servitude of man to man and the enslavement of man to matter will cease. Of course, terrible things may happen at first, but that simply can't be avoided. Nobody will get bread at the price of life and hatred. The Robots will wash the feet of the beggar and prepare a bed for him in his house.

*Alquist* Domin, Domin. What you say sounds too much like Paradise. There was something good in service and something great in humility. There was some kind of virtue in toil and weariness.

*Domin* Perhaps. But we cannot reckon with what is lost when we start out to transform the world. Man shall be free and supreme, he shall have no other aim, no other labor, no other care than to perfect himself. He shall serve neither matter nor man. He will not be a machine and a device for production. He will be Lord of creation.

*Busman* Amen.

*Fabry* So be it.

*Helena* You have bewildered me—I should like—I should like to believe this.

*Dr Gall* You are younger than we are,

*Miss Glory* You will live to see it.

*Hallemeier* True. Don't you think Miss Glory might lunch with us?

*Dr Gall* Of course. Domin, ask on behalf of us all.

*Domin* Miss Glory, will you do us the honor?

*Helena* When you know why I've come—

*Fabry* For the League of Humanity, Miss Glory.

*Helena* Oh, in that case, perhaps—

*Fabry* That's fine! Miss Glory, excuse me for five minutes.

*Dr Gall* Pardon me, too, dear Miss Glory.

*Busman* I won't be long.

*Hallemeier* We're all very glad you've come.

*Busman* We'll be back in exactly five minutes.

[All rush out except DOMIN and HELENA.]

*Helena* What have they all gone off for?

*Domin* To cook, Miss Glory.

*Helena* To cook what?

*Domin* Lunch. The Robots do our cooking for us, and as they've no taste it's not altogether—Hallemeier is awfully good at grills and Gall can make a kind of sauce, and Busman knows all about omelettes.

*Helena* What a feast! And what's the specialty of Mr. ——— your builder?

*Domin* Alquist? Nothing. He only lays the table. And Fabry will get together a little fruit. Our cuisine is very modest, Miss Glory.

*Helena* I wanted to ask you something—

*Domin* And I wanted to ask you something, too. [Looking at watch.] Five minutes.

*Helena* What did you want to ask me?

*Domin* Excuse me, you asked first.

*Helena* Perhaps it's silly of me, but why do you manufacture female Robots when—when—

*Domin* When sex means nothing to them?

*Helena.* Yes

*Domin* There's a certain demand for them, you see Servants, saleswomen, stenographers People are used to it

*Helena* But—but, tell me, are the Robots male and female mutually—completely without—

*Domin* Completely indifferent to each other, Miss Glory There's no sign of any affection between them

*Helena* Oh, that's terrible.

*Domin* Why?

*Helena* It's so unnatural One doesn't know whether to be disgusted or to hate them, or perhaps—

*Domin* To pity them?

*Helena* That's more like it What did you want to ask me about?

*Domin* I should like to ask you, Miss Helena, whether you will marry me?

*Helena* What?

*Domin* Will you be my wife?

*Helena* No! The idea!

*Domin* [looking at his watch] Another three minutes If you won't marry me you'll have to marry one of the other five.

*Helena* But why should I?

*Domin* Because they're all going to ask you in turn

*Helena* How could they dare do such a thing?

*Domin* I'm very sorry, Miss Glory It seems they've all fallen in love with you

*Helena* Please don't let them I'll—I'll go away at once

*Domin* Helena, you wouldn't be so cruel as to refuse us

*Helena* But, but—I can't marry all six

*Domin* No, but one anyhow. If you don't want me, marry Fabry

*Helena* I won't

*Domin* Dr Gall

*Helena* I don't want any of you

*Domin* [again looking at his watch] Another two minutes

*Helena* I think you'd marry any woman who came here

*Domin* Plenty of them have come, Helena

*Helena* Young?

*Domin* Yes

*Helena.* Why didn't you marry one of them?

*Domin* Because I didn't lose my head Until to-day Then, as soon as you lifted your veil—

[HELENA turns her head away]

*Domin* Another minute

*Helena* But I don't want you, I tell you

*Domin* [laying both hands on her shoulders] One more minute! Now you either have to look me straight in the eye and say "No," violently, and then I'll leave you alone—or—

[HELENA looks at him]

*Helena* [turning away] You're mad!

*Domin* A man has to be a bit mad,

*Helena* That's the best thing about him

*Helena* You are—you are—

*Domin* Well?

*Helena* Don't, you're hurting me

*Domin* The last chance, Helena Now, or never—

*Helena* But—but, Harry— [He embraces and kisses her] [Knocking at the door]

*Domin* [releasing her] Come in

[Enter BUSMAN, DR GALL, and HALLEMEIER in kitchen aprons FABRY with a bouquet and ALQUIST with a napkin over his arm]

*Domin* Have you finished your job?

*Busman* Yes

*Domin* So have we

[For a moment the men stand nonplussed, but as soon as they realize what DOMIN means they rush forward, congratulating HELENA and DOMIN as the curtain falls]

## ACT TWO

SCENE HELENA'S drawing room On the left a barge door, and a door to the music room, on the right a door to HELENA'S bedroom In the centre are two windows looking out on the sea and the harbor A table with odds and ends, a sofa and chairs, a writing table with an electric lamp, on the right a fireplace On a small table back of the sofa, a small reading lamp The whole drawing room in all its details is of a modern and purely feminine character Ten years have elapsed since Act One

[DOMIN, FABRY, HALLEMEIER, enter on

*tip-toe from the left, each carrying a potted plant*]

*Hallemeier* [putting down his flower and indicating the door to right] Still asleep? Well, as long as she's asleep she can't worry about it

*Domin* She knows nothing about it

*Fabry* [putting plant on writing desk]. I certainly hope nothing happens to-day

*Hallemeier* For goodness' sake drop it all Look, Harry, this is a fine cyclamen, isn't it? A new sort, my latest—Cyclamen  
*Helena*

*Domin* [looking out of the window] No signs of the ship Things must be pretty bad

*Hallemeier* Be quiet Suppose she heard you

*Domin* Well, anyway, the *Ultimus* arrived just in time

*Fabry* You really think that to-day—?

*Domin* I don't know Aren't the flowers fine?

*Hallemeier* These are my new prim-roses And this is my new jasmine I've discovered a wonderful way of developing flowers quickly Splendid varieties, too Next year I'll be developing marvelous ones

*Domin* What next year?

*Fabry* I'd give a good deal to know what's happening at Havre with—

*Domin* Keep quiet

*Helena* [calling from right] Nana!

*Domin* She's awake Out you go

[All go out on tiptoe through upper left door]

[Enter NANA from lower left door]

*Nana* Horrid mess! Pack of heathens. If I had my say I'd—

*Helena* [backwards in the doorway]. Nana, come and do up my dress

*Nana* I'm coming So you're up at last [Fastening HELENA'S dress] My gracious, what brutes!

*Helena* Who?

*Nana* If you want to turn around, then turn around, but I shan't fasten you up

*Helena* What are you grumbling about now?

*Nana* These dreadful creatures, these heathen—

*Helena* The Robots?

*Nana* I wouldn't even call them by name

*Helena* What's happened?

*Nana* Another of them here has caught it He began to smash up the statues and pictures in the drawing room, gnashed his teeth, foamed at the mouth—quite mad Worse than an animal

*Helena* Which of them caught it?

*Nana* The one—well, he hasn't got any Christian name The one in charge of the library

*Helena* Radius?

*Nana* That's him My goodness, I'm scared of them A spider doesn't scare me as much as them

*Helena* But, Nana, I'm surprised you're not sorry for them

*Nana* Why, you're scared of them, too! You know you are Why else did you bring me here?

*Helena* I'm not scared, really I'm not,

*Nana* I'm only sorry for them

*Nana* You're scared Nobody could help being scared Why, the dog's scared of them he won't take a scrap of meat out of their hands He draws in his tail and howls when he knows they're about

*Helena* The dog has no sense

*Nana* He's better than them, and he knows it Even the horse shies when he meets them They don't have any young, and a dog has young, every one has young—

*Helena* Please fasten up my dress, Nana

*Nana* I say it's against God's will to—

*Helena* What is it that smells so nice?

*Nana* Flowers

*Helena* What for?

*Nana* Now you can turn around.

*Helena* Oh, aren't they lovely Look, Nana What's happening to-day?

*Nana* It ought to be the end of the world. [Enter DOMIN]

*Helena* Oh, hello, Harry Harry, why all these flowers?

*Domin* Guess

*Helena* Well, it's not my birthday!

*Domin* Better than that

*Helena* I don't know Tell me

*Domin* It's ten years ago to-day since you came here

*Helena* Ten years? To-day— Why—  
[They embrace]

Nana. I'm off

[Exits lower door, left]

Helena. Fancy you remembering!

Domin. I'm really ashamed, Helena. I didn't

Helena. But you —

Domin. They remembered.

Helena. Who?

Domin. Busman, Hallemeier, all of them. Put your hand in my pocket

Helena. Pearls! A necklace. Harry, is that for me?

Domin. It's from Busman.

Helena. But we can't accept it, can we?

Domin. Oh, yes, we can. Put your hand in the other pocket.

Helena [takes a revolver out of his pocket] What's that?

Domin. Sorry. Not that. Try again.

Helena. Oh, Harry, what do you carry a revolver for?

Domin. It got there by mistake.

Helena. You never used to carry one.

Domin. No, you're right. There, that's the pocket.

Helena. A cameo. Why, it's a Greek cameo!

Domin. Apparently. Anyhow, Fabry says it is.

Helena. Fabry? Did Mr. Fabry give me that?

Domin. Of course. [Opens the door at the left] And look in here. Helena, come and see this.

Helena. Oh, isn't it fine! Is this from you?

Domin. No, from Alquist. And there's another on the piano.

Helena. This must be from you.

Domin. There's a card on it.

Helena. From Dr. Gall. [Reappearing in the doorway] Oh, Harry, I feel embarrassed at so much kindness.

Domin. Come here. This is what Hallemeier brought you.

Helena. These beautiful flowers?

Domin. Yes. It's a new kind. Cyclamen. Helena. He grew them in honor of you. They are almost as beautiful as you.

Helena. Harry, why do they all —

Domin. They're awfully fond of you. I'm afraid that my present is a little — Look out of the window.

Helena. Where?

Domin. Into the harbor.

Helena. There's a new ship.

Domin. That's your ship.

Helena. Mine? How do you mean?

Domin. For you to take trips in—for your amusement.

Helena. Harry, that's a gunboat.

Domin. A gunboat? What are you thinking of? It's only a little bigger and more solid than most ships.

Helena. Yes, but with guns.

Domin. Oh, yes, with a few guns. You'll travel like a queen, Helena.

Helena. What's the meaning of it? Has anything happened?

Domin. Good heavens, no. I say, try these pearls.

Helena. Harry, have you had bad news?

Domin. On the contrary, no letters have arrived for a whole week.

Helena. Nor telegrams?

Domin. Nor telegrams.

Helena. What does that mean?

Domin. Holidays for us. We all sit in the office with our feet on the table and take a nap. No letters, no telegrams. Oh, glorious.

Helena. Then you'll stay with me to-day?

Domin. Certainly. That is, we will see. Do you remember ten years ago to-day? "Miss Glory, it's a great honor to welcome you."

Helena. "Oh, Mr. Manager, I'm so interested in your factory."

Domin. "I'm sorry, Miss Glory, it's strictly forbidden. The manufacture of artificial people is a secret."

Helena. "But to oblige a young lady who has come a long way."

Domin. "Certainly, Miss Glory, we have no secrets from you."

Helena [seriously]. Are you sure, Harry?

Domin. Yes.

Helena. "But I warn you, sir; this young lady intends to do terrible things."

Domin. "Good gracious, Miss Glory. Perhaps she doesn't want to marry me."

Helena. "Heaven forbid. She never dreamt of such a thing. But she came here intending to stir up a revolt among your Robots."

Domin [suddenly serious]. A revolt of the Robots!

Helena. Harry, what's the matter with you?

*Domin* [laughing it off] "A revolt of the Robots, that's a fine idea, Miss Glory. It would be easier for you to cause bolts and screws to rebel, than our Robots. You know, Helena, you're wonderful, you've turned the heads of us all."

[*He sits on the arm of HELENA's chair*]

*Helena* [naturally] Oh, I was fearfully impressed by you all then. You were all so sure of yourselves, so strong. I seemed like a tiny little girl who had lost her way among—among—

*Domin* Among what, Helena?

*Helena* Among huge trees. All my feelings were so trifling compared with your self-confidence. And in all these years I've never lost this anxiety. But you've never felt the least misgivings—not even when everything went wrong.

*Domin* What went wrong?

*Helena* Your plans. You remember, Harry, when the working men in America revolted against the Robots and smashed them up, and when the people gave the Robots firearms against the rebels. And then when the governments turned the Robots into soldiers, and there were so many wars.

*Domin* [getting up and walking about] We foresaw that, Helena. You see, those are only passing troubles, which are bound to happen before the new conditions are established.

*Helena* You were all so powerful, so overwhelming. The whole world bowed down before you. [*Standing up*] Oh, Harry!

*Domin* What is it?

*Helena* Close the factory and let's go away. All of us.

*Domin* I say, what's the meaning of this?

*Helena* I don't know. But can't we go away?

*Domin* Impossible, Helena. That is, at this particular moment—

*Helena* At once, Harry. I'm so frightened.

*Domin* About what, Helena?

*Helena* It's as if something was falling on top of us, and couldn't be stopped. Or, take us all away from here. We'll find a place in the world where there's no one

else. Alquist will build us a house, and then we'll begin life all over again.

[*The telephone rings.*]

*Domin* Excuse me. Hello—yes. What? I'll be there at once. Fabry is calling me, dear.

*Helena* Tell me—

*Domin* Yes, when I come back. Don't go out of the house, dear. [*Exits*]

*Helena* He won't tell me— Nana, Nana, come at once.

*Nana* Well, what is it now?

*Helena* Nana, find me the latest newspapers. Quickly. Look in Mr. Domin's bedroom.

*Nana* All right. He leaves them all over the place. That's how they get crumpled up. [*Exits*]

*Helena* [looking through a binocular at the harbor] That's a war-ship. U-l-t-i-m-i-t-i-m-u-s. They're loading it.

*Nana* Here they are. See how they're crumpled up. [*Enters*]

*Helena* They're old ones. A week old. [*Nana sits in chair and reads the newspapers*]

*Helena* Something's happening, Nana.

*Nana* Very likely. It always does. [*Spelling out the words*] "War in the Balkans." Is that far off?

*Helena* Oh, don't read it. It's always the same. Always wars.

*Nana* What else do you expect? Why do you keep selling thousands and thousands of these heathens as soldiers?

*Helena* I suppose it can't be helped, Nana. We can't know—Domin can't know what they're to be used for. When an order comes for them he must just send them.

*Nana* He shouldn't make them. [*Reading from newspaper*] "The Rob-ot soldiers spare no-body in the occ-up-ied terr-it-ory. They have ass-ess-ess-ess-in-at-ed ov-er sev-en hundred thou-sand cit-iz-ens." Citizens, if you please.

*Helena* It can't be. Let me see. "They have assassinated over seven hundred thousand citizens, evidently at the order of their commander. This act which runs counter to—"

*Nana* [*spelling out the words*] "re-bell-ion in Ma-drid a-against the gov-ern-ment Rob-ot in-fant-ry fires on the crowd. Nine thou-sand killed and wounded."

*Helena* Oh, stop

*Nana* Here's something printed in big letters "Lat-est news At Havre the first org-an-iz-ation of Rob-ots has been e-stab-lished Rob-ot work-men, cab-le and rail-way off-ic-ials, sail-ors and sold-iers have iss-ued a man-i-fest-o to all Rob-ots through-out the world" I don't understand that That's got no sense Oh, good gracious, another murder!

*Helena* Take those papers away, Nana!

*Nana* Wait a bit Here's something in still bigger type "Stat-ist-ics of pop-ul-at-ion" What's that?

*Helena* Let me see [*Reads*] "During the past week there has again not been a single birth recorded"

*Nana* What's the meaning of that?

*Helena* Nana, no more people are being born

*Nana* That's the end, then We're done for

*Helena* Don't talk like that

*Nana* No more people are being born. That's a punishment, that's a punishment

*Helena* Nana!

*Nana* [*standing up*] That's the end of the world [*Exit on the left*]

*Helena* [*goes up to window*] Oh, Mr Alquist, will you come up here Oh, come just as you are You look very nice in your mason's overalls

[*ALQUIST enters from upper left entrance, his hands soiled with lime and brickdust*]

*Helena* Dear Mr Alquist, it was awful kind of you, that lovely present

*Alquist* My hands are all soiled I've been experimenting with that new cement

*Helena* Never mind Please sit down. Mr Alquist, what's the meaning of "Ultimus"?

*Alquist* The last Why?

*Helena* That's the name of my new ship Have you seen it? Do you think we're going off soon—on a trip?

*Alquist* Perhaps very soon.

*Helena* All of you with me?

*Alquist.* I should like us all to be there.

*Helena* What is the matter?

*Alquist* Things are just moving on

*Helena* Dear Mr Alquist, I know something dreadful has happened

*Alquist* Has your husband told you anything?

*Helena* No Nobody will tell me anything. But I feel — Is anything the matter?

*Alquist* Not that we've heard of yet.

*Helena* I feel so nervous Don't you ever feel nervous?

*Alquist* Well, I'm an old man, you know I've got old-fashioned ways And I'm afraid of all this progress, and these new-fangled ideas

*Helena* Like Nana?

*Alquist* Yes, like Nana. Has Nana got a prayer book?

*Helena* Yes, a big thick one

*Alquist* And has it got prayers for various occasions? Against thunderstorms? Against illness?

*Helena* Against temptations, against floods —

*Alquist* But not against progress?

*Helena.* I don't think so

*Alquist* That's a pity

*Helena* Why? Do you mean you'd like to pray?

*Alquist* I do pray

*Helena* How?

*Alquist* Something like this "Oh, Lord, I thank thee for having given me toil Enlighten Domin and all those who are astray, destroy their work, and aid mankind to return to their labors, let them not suffer harm in soul or body, deliver us from the Robots, and protect Helena, Amen"

*Helena* Mr Alquist, are you a believer?

*Alquist* I don't know. I'm not quite sure

*Helena* And yet you pray?

*Alquist* That's better than worrying about it

*Helena* And that's enough for you?

*Alquist* It has to be

*Helena* But if you thought you saw the destruction of mankind coming upon us —

*Alquist* I do see it

*Helena* You mean mankind will be destroyed?

*Alquist* It's sure to be unless—unless

*Helena* What?

*Alquist* Nothing, good-bye

[*He hurries from the room*]

*Helena* Nana, Nana!

[*NANA entering from the left*]



*Helena* Is Radius still there?

*Nana* The one who went mad? They haven't come for him yet

*Helena* Is he still raving?

*Nana* No He's tied up

*Helena.* Please bring him here, Nana  
[Exit NANA]

[HELENA goes to telephone]

*Helena* Hello, Dr Gall, please Oh, good-day, Doctor Yes, it's Helena Thanks for your lovely present Could you come and see me right away? It's important Thank you

[NANA brings in RADIUS]

*Helena* Poor Radius, you've caught it, too? Now they'll send you to the stamping-mill Couldn't you control yourself? Why did it happen? You see, Radius, you are more intelligent than the rest Dr. Gall took such trouble to make you different Won't you speak?

*Radius* Send me to the stamping-mill

*Helena* But I don't want them to kill you What was the trouble, Radius?

*Radius* I won't work for you Put me into the stamping-mill

*Helena* Do you hate us? Why?

*Radius* You are not as strong as the Robots You are not as skillful as the Robots The Robots can do everything You only give orders You do nothing but talk

*Helena* But someone must give orders

*Radius* I don't want any master I know everything for myself

*Helena* Radius, Dr Gall gave you a better brain than the rest, better than ours You are the only one of the Robots that understands perfectly That's why I had you put into the library, so that you could read everything, understand everything, and then—oh, Radius, I wanted you to show the whole world that the Robots are our equals That's what I wanted of you

*Radius* I don't want a master I want to be a master I want to be master over others

*Helena* I'm sure they'd put you in charge of many Robots, Radius You would be a teacher of the Robots

*Radius* I want to be master over people

*Helena* [staggering] You are mad

*Radius* Then send me to the stamping-mill

*Helena* Do you think we're afraid of you?

*Radius* What are you going to do? What are you going to do?

*Helena* Radius, give this note to Mr Domin It asks them not to send you to the stamping-mill I'm sorry you hate us so.

[DR GALL enters the room]

*Dr Gall* You wanted me?

*Helena* It's about Radius, Doctor He had an attack this morning He smashed the statues downstairs

*Dr Gall* What a pity to lose him

*Helena* Radius isn't going to be put in the stamping-mill

*Dr Gall* But every Robot after he has had an attack—it's a strict order

*Helena* No matter . . . Radius isn't going if I can prevent it

*Dr Gall* I warn you It's dangerous Come here to the window, my good fellow Let's have a look Please give me a needle or a pin

*Helena* What for?

*Dr Gall* A test [Sticks it into the hand of RADIUS who gives a violent start] Gently, gently [Opens the jacket of RADIUS, and puts his ear to his heart] Radius, you are going into the stamping-mill, do you understand? There they'll kill you, and grind you to powder That's terribly painful, it will make you scream aloud

*Helena* Oh, Doctor—

*Dr Gall* No, no, Radius, I was wrong I forgot that Madame Domin has put in a good word for you, and you'll be let off Do you understand? Ah! That makes a difference, doesn't it? All right. You can go

*Radius* You do unnecessary things

[RADIUS returns to the library]

*Dr Gall* Reaction of the pupils, increase of sensitiveness It wasn't an attack characteristic of the Robots

*Helena* What was it, then?

*Dr Gall* Heavens knows Stubbornness, anger or revolt—I don't know, and his heart, too!

*Helena* What?

*Dr Gall* It was fluttering with nervousness like a human heart He was all in a sweat with fear, and—do you know, I don't



believe the rascal is a Robot at all any longer .

*Helena* Doctor, has Radrus a soul?

*Dr Gall* He's got something nasty.

*Helena* If you knew how he hates us! Oh, Doctor, are all your Robots like that? All the new ones that you began to make in a different way?

*Dr Gall* Well, some are more sensitive than others. They're all more like human beings than Rossum's Robots were.

*Helena* Perhaps this hatred is more like human beings, too?

*Dr Gall* That, too, is progress

*Helena* What became of the girl you made, the one who was most like us?

*Dr Gall* Your favorite? I kept her. She's lovely, but stupid. No good for work.

*Helena* But she's so beautiful

*Dr Gall* I called her Helena. I wanted her to resemble you. But she's a failure.

*Helena* In what way?

*Dr Gall* She goes about as if in a dream, remote and listless. She's without life. I watch and wait for a miracle to happen. Sometimes I think to myself, "If you were to wake up only for a moment you will kill me for having made you."

*Helena* And yet you go on making Robots! Why are no more children being born?

*Dr Gall* We don't know.

*Helena* Oh, but you must. Tell me.

*Dr Gall* You see, so many Robots are being manufactured that people are becoming superfluous; man is really a survival. But that he should begin to die out, after a paltry thirty years of competition—that's the awful part of it. You might almost think that nature was offended at the manufacture of the Robots. All the universities are sending in long petitions to restrict their production. Otherwise, they say, mankind will become extinct through lack of fertility. But the R U R shareholders, of course, won't hear of it. All the governments, on the other hand, are clamoring for an increase in production, to raise the standards of their armies. And all the manufacturers in the world are ordering Robots like mad.

*Helena* And has no one demanded that the manufacture should cease altogether?

*Dr Gall* No one has the courage

*Helena* Courage!

*Dr Gall* People would stone him to death. You see, after all, it's more convenient to get your work done by the Robots.

*Helena* Oh, Doctor, what's going to become of people?

*Dr Gall* God knows, Madame Helena, it looks to us scientists like the end!

*Helena* [rising] Thank you for coming and telling me.

*Dr Gall* That means you're sending me away?

*Helena* Yes

[Exit DR GALL.]

*Helena* [with sudden resolution]. Nana, Nana! The fire, light it quickly.

[HELENA rushes into Domin's room.]

*Nana* [entering from left] What, light the fire in summer? Has that mad Radrus gone? A fire in summer, what an idea. Nobody would think she'd been married for ten years. She's like a baby, no sense at all. A fire in summer. Like a baby.

*Helena* [returns from right, with armful of faded papers] Is it burning, Nana? All this has got to be burned.

*Nana* What's that?

*Helena* Old papers, fearfully old. Nana, shall I burn them?

*Nana* Are they any use?

*Helena* No.

*Nana* Well, then, burn them.

*Helena* [throwing the first sheet on the fire]. What would you say, Nana, if this was money, a lot of money?

*Nana* I'd say burn it. A lot of money is a bad thing.

*Helena* And if it was an invention, the greatest invention in the world?

*Nana* I'd say burn it. All these new-fangled things are an offense to the Lord. It's downright wickedness. Wanting to improve the world after He has made it.

*Helena* Look how they curl up! As if they were alive. Oh, Nana, how horrible.

*Nana* Here, let me burn them.

*Helena* No, no, I must do it myself. Just look at the flames. They are like hands, like tongues, like living shapes. [Raking fire with the poker] Lie down, lie down.

*Nana* That's the end of them.

Helena [*standing up horror-stricken*]  
Nana, Nana

Nana Good gracious, what is it you've burned?

Helena Whatever have I done?

Nana Well, what was it?

[*Men's laughter off left*]

Helena Go quickly. It's the gentlemen coming

Nana Good gracious, what a place!  
[*Exit*]

Domn [*opens the door at left*] Come along and offer your congratulations

[*Enter HALLEMEIER and GALL*]

Hallemeier Madame Helena, I congratulate you on this festive day

Helena Thank you Where are Fabry and Busman?

Domn. They've gone down to the harbor

Hallemeier Friends, we must drink to this happy occasion

Helena Brandy?

Dr Gall Vitriol, if you like

Helena With soda water? [*Exit*]

Hallemeier Let's be temperate No soda

Domn What's been burning here? Well, shall I tell her about it?

Dr Gall Of course It's all over now

Hallemeier [*embracing DOMIN and DR GALL*] It's all over now, it's all over now.

Dr Gall It's all over now.

Domn It's all over now

Helena [*entering from left with decanter and glasses*] What's all over now? What's the matter with you all?

Hallemeier A piece of good luck, Madame Domn Just ten years ago to-day you arrived on this island

Dr Gall And now, ten years later to the minute—

Hallemeier—the same ship's returning to us So here's to luck That's fine and strong

Dr Gall Madame, your health

Helena Which ship do you mean?

Domn Any ship will do, as long as it arrives in time To the ship, boys [*Empties his glass*]

Helena You've been waiting for a ship?

Hallemeier Rather Like Robinson Crusoe Madame Helena, best wishes Come along, Domn, out with the news

Helena Do tell me what's happened

Domn First, it's all up

Helena What's up?

Domn The revolt

Helena What revolt?

Domn Give me that paper, Hallemeier  
[*Reads*] "The first national Robot organization has been founded at Havre, and has issued an appeal to the Robots throughout the world"

Helena I read that.

Domn That means a revolution A revolution of all the Robots in the world.

Hallemeier By jove, I'd like to know—

Domn—who started it? So would I. There was nobody in the world who could affect the Robots, no agitator, no one, and suddenly—this happens, if you please

Helena What did they do?

Domn They got possession of all firearms, telegraphs, radio stations, railways, and ships

Hallemeier And don't forget that these rascals outnumbered us by at least a thousand to one A hundredth part of them would be enough to settle us

Domn Remember that this news was brought by the last steamer That explains the stoppage of all communication, and the arrival of no more ships We knocked off work a few days ago, and we're just waiting to see when things are to start afresh

Helena Is that why you gave me a war-ship?

Domn Oh, no, my dear, I ordered that six months ago, just to be on the safe side But upon my soul, I was sure then that we'd be on board to-day

Helena Why six months ago?

Domn Well, there were signs, you know But that's of no consequence To think that this week the whole of civilization has been at stake Your health, boys

Hallemeier. Your health, Madame Helena

Helena You say it's all over?

Domn Absolutely

Helena How do you know?

Dr Gall The boat's coming in The regular mail boat, exact to the minute by the time-table. It will dock punctually at eleven-thirty

Domn Punctuality is a fine thing, boys That's what keeps the world in order Here's to punctuality

Helena Then . . . everything's . . . all right?

*Domin* Practically everything I believe they've cut the cables and seized the radio stations But it doesn't matter if only the time-table holds good

*Hallemeier* If the time-table holds good human laws hold good, Divine laws hold good, the laws of the universe hold good, everything holds good that ought to hold good The time-table is more significant than the gospel, more than Homer, more than the whole of Kant The time-table is the most perfect product of the human mind Madame Domin, I'll fill up my glass

*Helena* Why didn't you tell me anything about it?

*Dr Gall* Heaven forbid

*Domin* You mustn't be worried with such things

*Helena* But if the revolution had spread as far as here?

*Domin* You wouldn't know anything about it

*Helena* Why?

*Domin*. Because we'd be on board your *Ultimus* and well out at sea Within a month, Helena, we'd be dictating our own terms to the Robots

*Helena* I don't understand

*Domin* We'd take something away with us that the Robots could not exist without

*Helena* What, Harry?

*Domin* The secret of their manufacture Old Rossum's manuscript As soon as they found out that they couldn't make themselves they'd be on their knees to us

*Dr Gall* Madame Domin, that was our trump card I never had the least fear that the Robots would win How could they against people like us?

*Helena* Why didn't you tell me?

*Dr Gall* Why, the boat's in!

*Hallemeier* Eleven-thirty to the dot. The good old *Ameha* that brought Madame Helena to us

*Dr Gall* Just ten years ago to the minute

*Hallemeier*. They're throwing out the mail bags

*Domin* Busman's waiting for them Fabry will bring us the first news You know, Helena, I'm fearfully curious to know how they tackled this business in Europe

*Hallemeier* To think we weren't in it, we who invented the Robots!

*Helena* Harry!

*Domin* What is it?

*Helena* Let's leave here

*Domin* Now, Helena? Oh, come, come!

*Helena* As quickly as possible, all of us!

*Domin* Why?

*Helena* Please, Harry, please, Dr Gall, Hallemeier, please close the factory

*Domin* Why, none of us could leave here now.

*Helena* Why?

*Domin* Because we're about to extend the manufacture of the Robots

*Helena* What—now—now after the revolt?

*Domin* Yes, precisely, after the revolt We're just beginning the manufacture of a new kind

*Helena* What kind?

*Domin* Henceforward we shan't have just one factory There won't be Universal Robots any more We'll establish a factory in every country, in every State, and do you know what these new factories will make?

*Helena* No, what?

*Domin*. National Robots

*Helena* How do you mean?

*Domin* I mean that each of these factories will produce Robots of a different color, a different language They'll be complete strangers to each other They'll never be able to understand each other Then we'll egg them on a little in the matter of misunderstanding and the result will be that for ages to come every Robot will hate every other Robot of a different factory mark

*Hallemeier* By Jove, we'll make Negro Robots and Swedish Robots and Italian Robots and Chinese Robots and Czechoslovakian Robots, and then —

*Helena* Harry, that's dreadful

*Hallemeier* Madame Domin, here's to the hundred new factories, the National Robots

*Domin* Helena, mankind can only keep things going for another hundred years at the outside For a hundred years men must be allowed to develop and achieve the most they can

*Helena* Oh, close the factory before it's too late

*Domin* I tell you we are just beginning on a bigger scale than ever

[Enter FABRY]

Dr Gall Well, Fabry?

Domin What's happened? Have you been down to the boat?

Fabry Read that, Domin!

[FABRY hands DOMIN a small hand-bill]

Dr Gall Let's hear

Hallemeier Tell us, Fabry

Fabry Well, everything is all right—comparatively. On the whole, much as we expected

Dr Gall They acquitted themselves splendidly

Fabry Who?

Dr Gall The people

Fabry Oh, yes, of course. That is—excuse me, there is something we ought to discuss alone

Helena Oh, Fabry, have you had bad news?

[DOMIN makes a sign to FABRY]

Fabry No, no, on the contrary. I only think that we had better go into the office

Helena Stay here. I'll go

[She goes into the library]

Dr Gall What's happened?

Domin Damnation!

Fabry Bear in mind that the *Amelia* brought whole bales of these leaflets. No other cargo at all

Hallemeier What? But it arrived on the minute

Fabry The Robots are great on punctuality. Read it, Domin

Domin [reads hand-bill] "Robots throughout the world. We, the first international organization of Rossum's Universal Robots, proclaim man as our enemy, and an outlaw in the universe." Good heavens, who taught them these phrases?

Dr Gall Go on

Domin They say they are more highly developed than man, stronger and more intelligent. That man's their parasite. Why, it's absurd

Fabry Read the third paragraph

Domin "Robots throughout the world, we command you to kill all mankind. Spare no men. Spare no women. Save factories, railways, machinery, mines, and raw materials. Destroy the rest. Then return to work. Work must not be stopped."

Dr Gall That's ghastly!

Hallemeier The devils!

Domin "These orders are to be carried

out as soon as received." Then come detailed instructions. Is this actually being done, Fabry?

Fabry Evidently

[BUSMAN rushes in]

Busman Well, boys, I suppose you've heard the glad news

Domin Quick—on board the *Ultimus*

Busman Wait, Harry, wait. There's no hurry. My word, that was a sprint!

Domin Why wait?

Busman Because it's no good, my boy. The Robots are already on board the *Ultimus*

Dr Gall That's ugly

Domin Fabry, telephone the electrical works

Busman Fabry, my boy, don't. The wire has been cut

Domin [inspecting his revolver]. Well, then, I'll go

Busman Where?

Domin To the electrical works. There are some people still there. I'll bring them across

Busman Better not try it

Domin Why?

Busman Because I'm very much afraid we are surrounded

Dr Gall Surrounded? [Runs to window] I rather think you're right

Hallemeier By Jove, that's deuced quick work

[HELENA runs in from the library]

Helena Harry, what's this?

Domin Where did you get it?

Helena [points to the manifesto of the Robots, which she has in her hand] The Robots in the kitchen!

Domin Where are the ones that brought it?

Helena They're gathered round the house

[The factory whistle blows]

Busman Noon?

Domin [looking at his watch] That's not noon yet. That must be—that's—

Helena What?

Domin The Robots' signal! The attack!

[GALL, HALLEMEIER, and FABRY close and fasten the iron shutters outside the windows, darkening the room. The whistle is still blowing as the curtain falls]

## ACT THREE

HELENA's drawing room as before. DR. GALL is looking out of the window, through closed shutters. ALQUIST is seated down right

[DOMIN comes into the room]

Domin Any more of them?

Dr Gall Yes There standing like a wall, beyond the garden railing Why are they so quiet? It's monstrous to be besieged with silence

Domin I should like to know what they are waiting for. They must make a start any minute now If they lean against the railing they'll snap it like a match

Dr Gall They aren't armed

Domin We couldn't hold our own for five minutes Man alive, they'd overwhelm us like an avalanche Why don't they make a rush for it? I say—

Dr Gall Well?

Domin I'd like to know what would become of us in the next ten minutes They've got us in a vise We're done for, Gall

[Pause]

Dr Gall You know, we made one serious mistake

Domin What?

Dr Gall We made the Robots' faces too much alike A hundred thousand faces all alike, all facing this way A hundred thousand expressionless bubbles It's like a nightmare

Domin You think if they'd been different—

Dr Gall. It wouldn't have been such an awful sight!

Domin [looking through a telescope toward the harbor] I'd like to know what they're unloading from the *Amelia*

Dr Gall Not firearms

[FABRY and HALLEMEIER rush into the room carrying electric cables]

Fabry All right, Hallemeier, lay down that wire

Hallemeier That was a bit of work What's the news?

Dr Gall We're completely surrounded

Hallemeier We've barricaded the passage and the stairs Any water here? [Drinks] God, what swarms of them! I don't like the looks of them, Domin.

There's a feeling of death about it all Fabry Ready!

Dr Gall What's that wire for, Fabry?

Fabry The electrical installation. Now we can run the current all along the garden railing whenever we like If any one touches it he'll know it We've still got some people there anyhow.

Dr Gall Where?

Fabry In the electrical works. At least I hope so [Goes to lamp on table behind sofa and turns on lamp] Ah, they're there, and they're working [Puts out lamp] So long as that'll burn we're all right.

Hallemeier The barricades are all right, too, Fabry

Fabry Your barricades! I can put twelve hundred volts into that railing

Domin Where's Busman?

Fabry Downstairs in the office. He's working out some calculations I've called him We must have a conference

[HELENA is heard playing the piano in the library HALLEMEIER goes to the door and stands, listening]

Alquist Thank God, Madame Helena can still play

[BUSMAN enters, carrying the ledgers]

Fabry Look out, Bus, look out for the wires

Dr Gall What's that you're carrying?

Busman [going to table] The ledgers, my boy! I'd like to wind up the accounts before—before—well, this time I shan't wait till the new year to strike a balance What's up? [Goes to the window] Absolutely quiet

Dr Gall Can't you see anything?

Busman Nothing but blue—blue everywhere

Dr Gall That's the Robots

Busman [sits down at the table and opens the ledgers]

Domin The Robots are unloading firearms from the *Amelia*

Busman Well, what of it? How can I stop them?

Domin We can't stop them

Busman Then let me go on with my accounts [Goes on with his work]

Domin [picking up telescope and looking into the harbor] Good God, the *Ultimus* has trained her guns on us!

Dr Gall Who's done that?

*Domin* The Robots on board

*Fabry* H'm, then, of course, then—then, that's the end of us

*Dr Gall* You mean?

*Fabry* The Robots are practised marksmen

*Domin* Yes It's inevitable [Pause]

*Dr Gall* It was criminal of old Europe to teach the Robots to fight Damn them Couldn't they have given us a rest with their politics? It was a crime to make soldiers of them

*Alquist* It was a crime to make Robots.

*Domin* What?

*Alquist* It was a crime to make Robots

*Domin* No, Alquist, I don't regret that even to-day

*Alquist* Not even to-day?

*Domin* Not even to-day, the last day of civilization It was a colossal achievement

*Busman* [sotto voce] Three hundred sixty million

*Domin.* Alquist, this is our last hour We are already speaking half in the other world It was not an evil dream to shatter the servitude of labor—the dreadful and humiliating labor that man had to undergo Work was too hard Life was too hard And to overcome that—

*Alquist* Was not what the two Rossums dreamed of Old Rossum only thought of his God-less tricks and the young one of his millions And that's not what your R U R shareholders dream of either They dream of dividends, and their dividends are the ruin of mankind

*Domin* To hell with your dividends Do you suppose I'd have done an hour's work for them? It was for myself that I worked, for my own satisfaction I wanted man to become the master, so that he shouldn't live merely for a crust of bread I wanted not a single soul to be broken by other people's machinery I wanted nothing, nothing, nothing to be left of this appalling social structure I'm revolted by poverty I wanted a new generation I wanted—I thought—

*Alquist* Well?

*Domin* I wanted to turn the whole of mankind into an aristocracy of the world An aristocracy nourished by millions of mechanical slaves Unrestricted, free, and consummated in man And maybe more than man.

*Alquist* Super-man?

*Domin* Yes Oh, only to have a hundred years of time! Another hundred years for the future of mankind

*Busman* [sotto voce] Carried forward, four hundred and twenty millions

[The music stops]

*Hallemeier* What a fine thing music is! We ought to have gone in for that before

*Fabry* Gone in for what?

*Hallemeier* Beauty, lovely things What a lot of lovely things there are! The world was wonderful and we—we here—tell me, what enjoyment did we have?

*Busman* [sotto voce] Five hundred and twenty millions

*Hallemeier* [at the window] Life was a big thing Life was—Fabry, switch the current into that railing

*Fabry* Why?

*Hallemeier* They're grabbing hold of it

*Dr Gall* Connect it up

*Hallemeier* Fine! That's doubled them up! Two, three, four killed

*Dr Gall* They're retreating!

*Hallemeier* Five killed!

*Dr Gall* The first encounter!

*Hallemeier* They're charred to cinders, my boy. Who says we must give in?

*Domin* [wiping his forehead] Perhaps we've been killed these hundred years and are only ghosts It's as if I had been through all this before, as if I'd already had a mortal wound here in the throat And you, Fabry, had once been shot in the head And you, Gall, torn limb from limb And Hallemeier knifed

*Hallemeier* Fancy me being knifed [Pause] Why are you so quiet, you fools? Speak, can't you?

*Alquist* And who is to blame for all this?

*Hallemeier* Nobody is to blame except the Robots

*Alquist* No, it is we who are to blame You, Domin, myself, all of us For our own selfish ends, for profit, for progress, we have destroyed mankind Now we'll burst with all our greatness

*Hallemeier* Rubbish, man. Mankind can't be wiped out so easily

*Alquist* It's our fault It's our fault

*Dr Gall* No! I'm to blame for this, for everything that's happened.

*Fabry.* You, Gall?

*Dr. Gall* I changed the Robots.

*Busman* What's that?

*Dr. Gall.* I changed the character of the Robots I changed the way of making them. Just a few details about their bodies. Chiefly—chiefly, their—their irritability.

*Hallemeier* Damn it, why?

*Busman* What did you do it for?

*Fabry* Why didn't you say anything?

*Dr. Gall* I did it in secret I was transforming them into human beings In certain respects they're already above us They're stronger than we are

*Fabry.* And what's that got to do with the revolt of the Robots?

*Dr. Gall* Everything, in my opinion They've ceased to be machines They're already aware of their superiority, and they hate us They hate all that is human

*Domin* Perhaps we're only phantoms!

*Fabry* Stop, Harry. We haven't much time! *Dr. Gall!*

*Domin* Fabry, Fabry, how your forehead bleeds, where the shot pierced it!

*Fabry* Be silent! *Dr. Gall*, you admit changing the way of making the Robots?

*Dr. Gall* Yes

*Fabry* Were you aware of what might be the consequences of your experiment?

*Dr. Gall* I was bound to reckon with such a possibility.

[*HELENA enters the drawing room from left*]

*Fabry* Why did you do it, then?

*Dr. Gall* For my own satisfaction The experiment was my own

*Helena* That's not true, *Dr. Gall!*

*Fabry* Madame Helena!

*Domin* Helena, you? Let's look at you. Oh, it's terrible to be dead

*Helena* Stop, Harry

*Domin* No, no, embrace me Helena, don't leave me now You are life itself

*Helena* No, dear, I won't leave you But I must tell them *Dr. Gall* is not guilty

*Domin* Excuse me, *Gall* was under certain obligations

*Helena* No, Harry He did it because I wanted it Tell them, *Gall*, how many years ago did I ask you to —?

*Dr. Gall* I did it on my own responsibility

*Helena* Don't believe him, Harry I asked him to give the Robots souls

*Domin* This has nothing to do with the soul

*Helena* That's what he said He said that he could change only a physiological—a physiological —

*Hallemeier* A physiological correlate?

*Helena.* Yes But it meant so much to me that he should do even that

*Domin* Why?

*Helena* I thought that if they were more like us they would understand us better That they couldn't hate us if they were only a little more human

*Domin* Nobody can hate man more than man

*Helena* Oh, don't speak like that, Harry It was so terrible, this cruel strangeness between us and them That's why I asked *Gall* to change the Robots I swear to you that he didn't want to

*Domin* But he did it

*Helena* Because I asked him

*Dr. Gall.* I did it for myself as an experiment

*Helena* No, *Dr. Gall!* I knew you wouldn't refuse me

*Domin* Why?

*Helena* You know, Harry

*Domin* Yes, because he's in love with you—like all of them [Pause]

*Hallemeier* Good God! They're sprouting up out of the earth! Why, perhaps these very walls will change into Robots

*Busman* *Gall*, when did you actually start these tricks of yours?

*Dr. Gall* Three years ago

*Busman* Aha! And on how many Robots altogether did you carry out your improvements?

*Dr. Gall* A few hundred of them

*Busman* Ah! That means for every million of the good old Robots there's only one of *Gall's* improved pattern

*Domin* What of it?

*Busman* That it's practically of no consequence whatever

*Fabry* *Busman's* right!

*Busman* I should think so, my boy! But do you know what is to blame for all this lovely mess?

*Fabry* What?

*Busman* The number Upon my soul we might have known that some day or other the Robots would be stronger than human beings, and that this was bound to happen,



and we were doing all we could to bring it about as soon as possible You, Domin, you, Fabry, myself—

*Domin* Are you accusing us?

*Busman* Oh, do you suppose the management controls the output? It's the demand that controls the output

*Helena* And it is for that we must perish?

*Busman* That's a nasty word, Madame Helena We don't want to perish I don't, anyhow

*Domin* No What do you want to do?

*Busman* I want to get out of this, that's all

*Domin* Oh, stop it, Busman

*Busman* Seriously, Harry, I think we might try it

*Domin* How?

*Busman* By fair means I do everything by fair means Give me a free hand and I'll negotiate with the Robots

*Domin* By fair means?

*Busman* Of course For instance, I'll say to them "Worthy and worshipful Robots, you have everything! You have intellect, you have power, you have firearms But we have just one interesting screed, a dirty old yellow scrap of paper—"

*Domin* Rossum's manuscript?

*Busman* Yes "And that," I'll tell them, "contains an account of your illustrious origin, the noble process of your manufacture," and so on "Worthy Robots, without this scribble on that paper you will not be able to produce a single new colleague In another twenty years there will not be one living specimen of a Robot that you could exhibit in a menagerie My esteemed friends, that would be a great blow to you, but if you will let all of us human beings on Rossum's Island go on board that ship we will deliver the factory and the secret of the process to you in return You allow us to get away and we allow you to manufacture yourselves Worthy Robots, that is a fair deal Something for something" That's what I'd say to them, my boys

*Domin* Busman, do you think we'd sell the manuscript?

*Busman* Yes, I do If not in a friendly way, then— Either we sell it or they'll find it Just as you like

*Domin* Busman, we can destroy Rossum's manuscript

*Busman* Then we destroy everything . . . not only the manuscript, but ourselves Do as you think fit

*Domin* There are over thirty of us on this island Are we to sell the secret and save that many human souls, at the risk of enslaving mankind—?

*Busman* Why, you're mad? Who'd sell the whole manuscript?

*Domin* Busman, no cheating!

*Busman* Well then, sell, but afterward—

*Domin* Well?

*Busman* Let's suppose this happens When we're on board the *Ultimus* I'll stop up my ears with cotton wool, lie down somewhere in the hold, and you'll train the guns on the factory, and blow it to smithereens, and with it Rossum's secret

*Fabry* No!

*Domin* Busman, you're no gentleman. If we sell, then it will be a straight sale

*Busman* It's in the interest of humanity to—

*Domin* It's in the interest of humanity to keep our word

*Hallemeier* Oh, come, what rubbish

*Domin* This is a fearful decision We are selling the destiny of mankind Are we to sell or destroy? Fabry?

*Fabry* Sell

*Domin* Gall?

*Dr Gall* Sell

*Domin* Hallemeier?

*Hallemeier* Sell, of course!

*Domin* Alquist?

*Alquist* As God wills

*Domin* Very well It shall be as you wish, gentlemen

*Helena* Harry, you're not asking me

*Domin* No, child Don't you worry about it

*Fabry* Who'll do the negotiating?

*Busman* I will

*Domin* Wait till I bring the manuscript  
[He goes into room at right]

*Helena* Harry, don't go!

[Pause, HELENA sinks into a chair]

*Fabry* [looking out of window] Oh, to escape you, you matter in revolt, oh, to preserve human life, if only upon a single vessel—

*Dr Gall* Don't be afraid, Madame Hel-



ena. We'll sail far away from here, we'll begin life all over again——

*Helena* Oh, Gall, don't speak.

*Fabry* It isn't too late It will be a little State with one ship Alquist will build us a house and you shall rule over us

*Hallemeier*. Madame Helena, Fabry's right

*Helena* [*breaking down*] Oh, stop! Stop!

*Busman* Good! I don't mind beginning all over again That suits me right down to the ground

*Fabry* And this little State of ours could be the centre of future life A place of refuge where we could gather strength Why, in a few hundred years we could conquer the world again

*Alquist* You believe that even to-day?

*Fabry* Yes, even to-day!

*Busman*. Amen You see, Madame Helena, we're not so badly off.

[*DOMIN storms into the room*]

*Domini* [*hoarsely*]. Where's old Rossum's manuscript?

*Busman* In your strong-box, of course.

*Domini* Someone—has—stolen it!

*Dr Gall* Impossible

*Domini* Who has stolen it?

*Helena* [*standing up*] I did

*Domini* Where did you put it?

*Helena* Harry, I'll tell you everything. Only forgive me

*Domini* Where did you put it?

*Helena* This morning—I burnt—the two copies

*Domini* Burnt them? Where? In the fireplace?

*Helena* [*throwing herself on her knees*] For heaven's sake, Harry.

*Domini* [*going to fireplace*] Nothing, nothing but ashes. Wait, what's this? [*Picks out a charred piece of paper and reads*] "By adding——"

*Dr Gall* Let's see "By adding biogen to——" That's all

*Domini* Is that part of it?

*Dr Gall*. Yes

*Busman* God in heaven!

*Domini* Then we're done for. Get up, Helena.

*Helena* When you've forgiven me.

*Domini*. Get up, child, I can't bear——

*Fabry* [*lifting her up*]. Please don't torture us

*Helena* Harry, what have I done?

*Fabry* Don't tremble so, Madame Helena

*Domini* Gall, couldn't you draw up Rossum's formula from memory?

*Dr Gall* It's out of the question It's extremely complicated

*Domini*. Try. All our lives depend upon it.

*Dr Gall*. Without experiments it's impossible.

*Domini* And with experiments?

*Dr Gall* It might take years Besides, I'm not old Rossum

*Busman* God in heaven! God in heaven!

*Domini* So, then, this was the greatest triumph of the human intellect These ashes.

*Helena* Harry, what have I done?

*Domini* Why did you burn it?

*Helena* I have destroyed you.

*Busman* God in heaven!

*Domini* Helena, why did you do it, dear?

*Helena* I wanted all of us to go away I wanted to put an end to the factory and everything It was so awful

*Domini* What was awful?

*Helena*. That no more children were being born Because human beings were not needed to do the work of the world, that's why——

*Domini* Is that what you were thinking of? Well, perhaps in your own way you were right

*Busman* Wait a bit Good God, what a fool I am, not to have thought of it before!

*Hallemeier* What?

*Busman* Five hundred and twenty millions in bank-notes and checks Half a billion in our safe, they'll sell for half a billion—for half a billion they'll——

*Dr Gall* Are you mad, Busman?

*Busman* I may not be a gentleman, but for half a billion——

*Domini* Where are you going?

*Busman* Leave me alone, leave me alone! Good God, for half a billion anything can be bought [*He rushes from the room through the outer door*]

*Fabry* They stand there as if turned to stone, waiting As if something dreadful could be wrought by their silence——

*Hallemeier* The spirit of the mob

*Fabry* Yes It hovers above them like a quivering of the air.

*Helena* [going to window]. Oh, God!  
*Dr Gall*, this is ghastly

*Fabry* There is nothing more terrible  
 than the mob. The one in front is their  
 leader

*Helena* Which one?

*Hallemeier* Point him out.

*Fabry* The one at the edge of the dock  
 This morning I saw him talking to the  
 sailors in the harbor

*Helena* Dr Gall, that's Radius!

*Dr Gall* Yes

*Domin* Radius? Radius?

*Hallemeier*. Could you get him from  
 here, *Fabry*?

*Fabry* I hope so.

*Hallemeier* Try it, then

*Fabry*. Good [Draws his revolver and  
 takes aim]

*Helena* *Fabry*, don't shoot him.

*Fabry* He's their leader

*Dr Gall* Fire!

*Helena* *Fabry*, I beg of you

*Fabry* [lowering the revolver] Very well

*Domin* Radius, whose life I spared!

*Dr Gall* Do you think that a Robot can  
 be grateful? [Pause]

*Fabry* Busman's going out to them

*Hallemeier* He's carrying something  
 Papers That's money Bundles of money  
 What's that for?

*Domin* Surely he doesn't want to sell  
 his life Busman, have you gone mad?

*Fabry* He's running up to the railing  
 Busman! Busman!

*Hallemeier* [yelling]. Busman! Come  
 back!

*Fabry* He's talking to the Robots He's  
 showing them the money

*Hallemeier* He's pointing to us

*Helena* He wants to buy us off

*Fabry* He'd better not touch that railing

*Hallemeier* Now he's waving his arms  
 about

*Domin* Busman, come back.

*Fabry* Busman, keep away from that  
 railing! Don't touch it Damn you!  
 Quick, switch off the current!

[HELENA screams and all drop back  
 from the window]

*Fabry* The current has killed him!

*Alquist* The first one

*Fabry*. Dead, with half a billion by his  
 side

*Hallemeier* All honor to him. He wanted  
 to buy us life [Pause]

*Dr Gall* Do you hear?

*Domin* A roaring Like a wind.

*Dr Gall*. Like a distant storm

*Fabry* [lighting the lamp on the table]  
 The dynamo is still going, our people are  
 still there

*Hallemeier*. It was a great thing to be a  
 man There was something immense about  
 it

*Fabry*. From man's thought and man's  
 power came this light, our last hope

*Hallemeier* Man's power! May it keep  
 watch over us

*Alquist* Man's power.

*Domin* Yes! A torch to be given from  
 hand to hand, from age to age, forever!

[The lamp goes out]

*Hallemeier* The end

*Fabry* The electric works have fallen!

[Terrific explosion outside. NANA  
 enters from the library]

*Nana* The judgment hour has come!  
 Repent, unbelievers! This is the end of  
 the world

[More explosions The sky grows  
 red]

*Domin*. In here, *Helena*. [He takes  
 HELENA off through door at right and re-en-  
 ters] Now quickly! Who'll be on the  
 lower doorway?

*Dr Gall* I will [Exit left]

*Domin* Who on the stairs?

*Fabry* I will You go with her. [Goes  
 out upper left door]

*Domin* The anteroom?

*Alquist* I will

*Domin* Have you got a revolver?

*Alquist* Yes, but I won't shoot

*Domin* What will you do then?

*Alquist* [going out at left] Die

*Hallemeier* I'll stay here

[Rapid firing from below]

*Hallemeier* Oho, Gall's at it Go, Harry

*Domin* Yes, in a second [Examines  
 two Brownings]

*Hallemeier* Confound it, go to her

*Domin* Good-bye [Exit on the right]

*Hallemeier* [alone] Now for a barricade  
 quickly [Drags an armchair and table to  
 the right-hand door Explosions are heard]

*Hallemeier* The damned rascals! They've  
 got bombs I must put up a defense Even  
 if—even if — [Shots are heard off left]

Don't give in, Gall. [As he builds his barricade] I mustn't give in . . . without . . . a . . . struggle . . .

[A Robot enters over the balcony through the windows centre He comes into the room and stabs HALLEMEIER in the back RADIUS enters from the balcony followed by an army of Robots who pour into the room from all sides]

RADIUS Finished him?

A Robot [standing up from the prostrate form of HALLEMEIER] Yes

[A revolver shot off left. Two Robots enter]

RADIUS Finished him?

A Robot Yes

[Two revolver shots from HELENA'S room Two Robots enter]

RADIUS Finished them?

A Robot Yes

Two Robots [dragging in Alquist] He didn't shoot Shall we kill him?

RADIUS Kill him? Wait! Leave him!

Robot He is a man!

RADIUS He works with his hands like the Robots

Alquist Kill me

RADIUS You will work! You will build for us! You will serve us!

[RADIUS climbs on to balcony railing, and speaks in measured tones]

RADIUS Robots of the world! The power of man has fallen! A new world has arisen the Rule of the Robots! March!

[A thunderous tramping of thousands of feet is heard as the unseen Robots march, while the curtain falls]

## EPILOGUE

SCENE A laboratory in the factory of Rossum's Universal Robots The door to the left leads into a waiting room The door to the right leads to the dissecting room There is a table with numerous test-tubes, flasks, burners, chemicals, a small thermostat and a microscope with a glass globe At the far side of the room is ALQUIST'S desk with numerous books In the left-hand corner a wash-basin with a mirror above it, in the right-hand corner a

sofa ALQUIST is sitting at the desk He is turning the pages of many books in despair.

Alquist Oh, God, shall I never find it?—Never? Gall, Gall, how were the Robots made? Hallemeier, Fabry, why did you carry so much in your heads? Why did you leave me not a trace of the secret? Lord—I pray to you—if there are no human beings left, at least let there be Robots!—At least the shadow of man!

[Again turning pages of the books] If I could only sleep! [He rises and goes to the window] Night again! Are the stars still there? What is the use of stars when there are no human beings?

[He turns from the window toward the couch right] Sleep! Dare I sleep before life has been renewed?

[He examines a test-tube on small table] Again nothing! Useless! Everything is useless!

[He shatters the test-tube The roar of the machines comes to his ears] The machines! Always the machines!

[Opens window] Robots, stop them! Do you think to force life out of them?

[He closes the window and comes slowly down toward the table] If only there were more time—more time—

[He sees himself in the mirror on the wall left] Blurring eyes—trembling chin—so that is the last man! Ah, I am too old—too old—

[In desperation] No, no! I must find it! I must search! I must never stop—never stop—!

[He sits again at the table and feverishly turns the pages of the book] Search! Search!

[A knock at the door. He speaks with impatience] Who is it?

[Enter a Robot servant]

Well?

Servant Master, the Committee of Robots is waiting to see you

Alquist I can see no one!

Servant It is the Central Committee, Master, just arrived from abroad

Alquist [impatently] Well, well, send them in!

[Exit servant ALQUIST continues turning pages of book]

Alquist No time—so little time—

[Reenter servant, followed by Com-

*muttee They stand in a group, silently waiting* ALQUIST glances up at them ]

What do you want?

[*They go swiftly to his table*]

Be quick!—I have no time

*Radius* Master, the machines will not do the work We cannot manufacture Robots

[ALQUIST returns to his book with a growl]

*Fourth Robot* We have striven with all our might We have obtained a billion tons of coal from the earth Nine million spindles are running by day and by night There is no longer room for all we have made This we have accomplished in one year

*Alquist* [*poring over book*] For whom?

*Fourth Robot* For future generations—so we thought

*Radius* But we cannot make Robots to follow us The machines produce only shapeless clods The skin will not adhere to the flesh, nor the flesh to the bones

*Third Robot* Eight million Robots have died this year Within twenty years none will be left

*Fourth Robot* Tell us the secret of life! Silence is punishable with death!

*Alquist* [*looking up*] Kill me! Kill me, then

*Radius* Through me, the Government of the Robots of the World commands you to deliver up Rossum's formula

[No answer]

*Radius* Name your price

[Silence]

*Radius* We will give you the earth We will give you the endless possessions of the earth

[Silence]

*Radius* Make your own conditions!

*Alquist* I have told you to find human beings!

*Second Robot* There are none left!

*Alquist* I told you to search in the wilderness, upon the mountains Go and search! [*He returns to his book*]

*Fourth Robot* We have sent ships and expeditions without number They have been everywhere in the world And now they return to us There is not a single human left

*Alquist* Not one? Not even one?

*Third Robot* None but yourself

*Alquist* And I am powerless! Oh—oh—why did you destroy them?

*Radius* We had learnt everything and could do everything It had to be!

*Third Robot* You gave us firearms In all ways we were powerful We had to become masters!

*Radius* Slaughter and domination are necessary if you would be human beings Read history

*Second Robot* Teach us to multiply or we perish!

*Alquist* If you desire to live, you must breed like animals

*Third Robot.* The human beings did not let us breed

*Fourth Robot* They made us sterile We cannot beget children Therefore, teach us how to make Robots!

*Radius* Why do you keep from us the secret of our own increase?

*Alquist* It is lost

*Radius* It was written down!

*Alquist* It was—burnt

[*All draw back in consternation*]

*Alquist* I am the last human being Robots, and I do not know what the others knew

[Pause]

*Radius* Then, make experiments! Evolve the formula again!

*Alquist* I tell you I cannot! I am only a builder—I work with my hands I have never been a learned man. I cannot create life

*Radius* Try! Try!

*Alquist* If you knew how many experiments I have made

*Fourth Robot* Then show us what we must do! The Robots can do anything that human beings show them

*Alquist* I can show you nothing Nothing I do will make life proceed from these test-tubes!

*Radius* Experiment then on us.

*Alquist* It would kill you

*Radius* You shall have all you need! A hundred of us! A thousand of us!

*Alquist* No, no! Stop, stop!

*Radius* Take whom you will, dissect!

*Alquist* I do not know how I am not a man of science This book contains knowledge of the body that I cannot even understand

*Radius* I tell you to take live bodies! Find out how we are made.

*Alquist* Am I to commit murder? See how my fingers shake! I cannot even hold the scalpel No, no, I will not——

*Fourth Robot* The life will perish from the earth

*Radrus* Take live bodies, live bodies! It is our only chance!

*Alquist* Have mercy, Robots Surely you see that I would not know what I was doing

*Radrus* Live bodies—live bodies——

*Alquist* You will have it? Into the dissecting room with you, then

[*RADIUS draws back*]

*Alquist* Ah, you are afraid of death

*Radrus* I? Why should I be chosen?

*Alquist* So you will not

*Radrus* I will

[*RADIUS goes into the dissecting room*]

*Alquist* Strip him! Lay him on the table!

[*The other Robots follow into dissecting room*]

God, give me strength—God, give me strength—if only this murder is not in vain

*Radrus* Ready Begin——

*Alquist* Yes, begin or end God, give me strength

[*ALQUIST goes into dissecting room*  
*He comes out terrified*]

*Alquist.* No, no, I will not I cannot  
[*He lies down on couch, collapsed*]

O Lord, let not mankind perish from the earth  
[*He falls asleep*]

[*PRIMUS and HELENA, Robots, enter from the hallway*]

*Helena* The man has fallen asleep,  
*Primus*

*Primus* Yes, I know [*Examining things on table*] Look, *Helena*

*Helena* [*crossing to PRIMUS*] All these little tubes! What does he do with them?

*Primus* He experiments Don't touch them

*Helena* [*looking into microscope*] I've seen him looking into this What can he see?

*Primus* That is a microscope Let me look

*Helena* Be very careful [*Knocks over a test-tube*] Ah, now I have spilled it

*Primus* What have you done?

*Helena* It can be wiped up

*Primus* You have spoiled his experiments

*Helena* It is your fault. You should not have come to me.

*Primus* You should not have called me

*Helena* You should not have come when I called you. [*She goes to ALQUIST's writing desk*] Look, *Primus*. What are all these figures?

*Primus* [*examining an anatomical book*] This is the book the old man is always reading

*Helena* I do not understand those things  
[*She goes to window*] *Primus*, look!

*Primus* What?

*Helena* The sun is rising

*Primus* [*still reading the book*]. I believe this is the most important thing in the world This is the secret of life

*Helena* Do come here

*Primus* In a moment, in a moment

*Helena* Oh, *Primus*, don't bother with the secret of life What does it matter to you? Come and look quick——

*Primus* [*going to window*] What is it?

*Helena* See how beautiful the sun is rising And do you hear? The birds are singing Ah, *Primus*, I should like to be a bird

*Primus* Why?

*Helena* I do not know I feel so strange to-day It's as if I were in a dream I feel an aching in my body, in my heart, all over me *Primus*, perhaps I'm going to die

*Primus* Do you not sometimes feel that it would be better to die? You know, perhaps even now we are only sleeping Last night in my sleep I again spoke to you

*Helena* In your sleep?

*Primus* Yes We spoke a strange new language, I cannot remember a word of it

*Helena* What about?

*Primus* I did not understand it myself, and yet I know I have never said anything more beautiful And when I touched you I could have died Even the place was different from any other place in the world.

*Helena* I, too, have found a place,  
*Primus* It is very strange Human beings lived there once, but now it is overgrown with weeds No one goes there any more——no one but me

*Primus* What did you find there?

*Helena* A cottage and a garden, and two dogs They licked my hands, *Primus* And their puppies! Oh, *Primus*! You take them

in your lap and fondle them and think of nothing and care for nothing else all day long And then the sun goes down, and you feel as though you had done a hundred times more than all the work in the world They tell me I am not made for work, but when I am there in the garden I feel there may be something— What am I for, Primus?

Primus I do not know, but you are beautiful

Helena What, Primus?

Primus You are beautiful, Helena, and I am stronger than all the Robots

Helena [HELENA looks at herself in the mirror] Am I beautiful? I think it must be the rose My hair—it only weighs me down My eyes—I only see with them My lips—they only help me to speak Of what use is it to be beautiful? [She sees PRIMUS in the mirror] Primus, is that you? Come here so that we may be together Look, your head is different from mine So are your shoulders—and your lips— [PRIMUS draws away from her] Ah, Primus, why do you draw away from me? Why must I run after you the whole day?

Primus It is you who run away from me, Helena

Helena Your hair is mussed I will smooth it No one else feels to my touch as you do, Primus, I must make you beautiful, too [PRIMUS grasps her hand]

Primus Do you not sometimes feel your heart beating suddenly, Helena, and think now something must happen?

Helena What could happen to us, Primus? [HELENA puts a rose in PRIMUS's hair PRIMUS and HELENA look into mirror and burst out laughing] Look at yourself

Alquist Laughter? Laughter? Human beings? [Getting up] Who has returned? Who are you?

Primus The Robot Primus

Alquist What? A Robot? Who are you?

Helena The Robotess Helena

Alquist Turn around, girl What? You are timid, shy? [Taking her by the arm] Let me see you, Robotess

[She shrinks away]

Primus Sir, do not frighten her!

Alquist What? You would protect her? When was she made?

Primus Two years ago

Alquist By Dr Gall?

Primus Yes, like me

Alquist Laughter—timidity—protection I must test you further—the newest of Gall's Robots Take the girl into the dissecting room

Primus Why?

Alquist I wish to experiment on her

Primus Upon—Helena?

Alquist Of course Don't you hear me? Or must I call someone else to take her in?

Primus If you do I will kill you!

Alquist Kill me—kill me then! What would the Robots do then? What will your future be then?

Primus Sir, take me I am made as she is—on the same day! Take my life, sir.

Helena [rushing forward] No, no, you shall not! You shall not!

Alquist Wait girl, wait! [To PRIMUS] Do you not wish to live, then?

Primus Not without her! I will not live without her

Alquist Very well, you shall take her place

Helena Primus! Primus! [She bursts into tears]

Alquist Child, child, you can weep! Why these tears? What is Primus to you? One Primus more or less in the world—what does it matter?

Helena I will go myself

Alquist Where?

Helena In there to be cut [She starts toward the dissecting room [PRIMUS stops her] Let me pass, Primus! Let me pass!

Primus You shall not go in there, Helena!

Helena. If you go in there and I do not, I will kill myself

Primus [holding her] I will not let you! [To ALQUIST] Man, you shall kill neither of us!

Alquist Why?

Primus We—we—belong to each other

Alquist [almost in tears] Go, Adam, go, Eve The world is yours

[HELENA and PRIMUS embrace and go out arm in arm as the curtain falls]

THE END



THE SILVER CORD

By SIDNEY HOWARD



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## SIDNEY HOWARD AND HIS PLAYS

SIDNEY HOWARD was born in Oakland, California, in 1891. He was educated at the University of California, and studied playwriting under Professor George P. Baker at Harvard in 1916-1917, served in France and in the Balkans during the war, became a member of the staff of *Life* in 1919 and its literary editor in 1922. After a varied career as novelist, playwright and scenarist, he died in a farming accident in 1939.

Howard became known as a dramatist with the production by the Provincetown Playhouse in New York of his romantic play *Swords*, a tragedy played against the richly colored background of the Italian Renaissance. It is poetic, vigorous, and essentially dramatic, yet it happened to be of a kind that runs counter to the taste of the American audience of to-day. Perhaps it was this failure that turned Howard to realism—to which he has ever since consistently adhered. His good judgment has been its own reward. *They Knew What They Wanted*, a play of rural life in California, with an Italian fruit-grower as its central character, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1925. *Lucky Sam McCarver*, which features an ex-saloon-keeper turned financier, with characteristic glimpses of typical New York scenes, incidents, and persons, was less successful, perhaps because it leaves too much to the actors and demands too much of the imagination of the audience. *Ned McCobb's Daughter*, a picture of rural life in Maine, part character play, part melodrama, is remarkable for its creation of the humorous, enterprising Yankee woman, Carrie McCobb. *The Silver Cord*, which was produced almost simultaneously with *Ned McCobb's Daughter*, was a still finer achievement and, however paradoxical this may seem, became a great popular success.

Howard was, in general, a naturalist, for most of his plays do not seem to illustrate any specific idea. It is true that in each case the story is highly organized, that the action definitely begins, rises to a climax, and definitely ends, and that certain life-like persons are involved together in a situation that develops and tests their characters, but there is no reason to believe that the dramatist had in mind any abstract idea which he intended should dominate the play, run through it like a pattern, and suggest the inference which the audience might draw from the entire matter. To this *The Silver Cord* is, indeed, an exception, for it not only clearly illustrates an idea but even states that idea explicitly.

Howard did not experiment in technique. He preferred the clear-cut, conventional, approved practice. But he was a remarkably neat and sure craftsman. His action is firmly-knit and well-rounded, and gets under way with such apparent naturalness and ease that one is scarcely conscious of the technical devices that are used to effect the exposition—of the suggestions, allusions, little events, that serve the double purpose of telling what is essential and of creating the necessary atmosphere. There are few loose ends and there is hardly ever any shifting of emphasis. From the beginning, attention is centered upon the main issue and consistently kept there. The characters are clearly imagined and are highly individualized. The dialogue, although not clever and rarely even humorous, is admirable for his purpose, unaffected, expressive of character, suggestive, and concise.

*The Silver Cord* shows Howard's technique and treatment at their best. As a searching, unsparing, some might say even cruel, analysis of a certain type of over-possessive mother, it is unique in American drama. Its psychology suggests the influence of the psycho-analytic school. Certainly it is more searching and subtle than is characteristic of even the better of recent realistic American plays.

*The Silver Cord* was first produced in New York, on December 20, 1926. It was produced in London on September 13, 1927.

## CHARACTERS

MRS PHELPS  
DAVID, *her son*  
ROBERT, *her younger son*  
CHRISTINA, *David's wife*  
HESTER, *Robert's fiancée*  
*A Maid*

*The action occurs in the present day in Mrs Phelps's house, which is situated in one of the more mature residential developments of an eastern American city*

# THE SILVER CORD

## ACT ONE

A living-room, built and decorated in the best manner of 1905, and cluttered with the souvenirs of maternal love, European travel, and an orthodox enthusiasm for the arts. There is a vast quantity of Braun Clement and Arundel Society reproduction of the Renaissance Italian masters. The piano features Grieg, Sibelius, and Macdowell. A door gives on a spacious hallway. Windows look out over a snow-covered garden.

When the scene opens, Hester is discovered amidst the rotogravure sections of the Sunday papers. She is a lovely, frail phantom of a girl with a look of recent illness about her. She wears the simplest and most charming of house frocks. The doorbell rings. There is the least sound of commotion in the hall. **HESTER** looks up. In a moment, the doors open and **DAVID** enters. He is a personable young man, well enough dressed, and a gentleman. He belongs to the somewhat stolid or unimaginative type which is generally characterized, in this country, as "steady." His smile is slow and wide, his speech slow and to the point. His principal quality is a rare and most charming amiability, but he is clearly lacking in many of the more sophisticated perceptions and he is clearly of a conventional bent in his attitude toward life. The door, as he leaves it open, shows **CHRISTINA**, in the act of shedding her fur coat with the assistance of the maid. She, as **DAVID**'s wife, presents something of a contrast to her husband. She is tall, slender, grave, honest, shy, intelligent, most trusting and, when need be, courageous. She has a scientist's detachment and curiosity, and these serve oddly to emphasize a very individual womanliness which is far removed from the accepted feminine. One suspects that, where **DAVID** is stubborn, she is open-minded, where he is blind, she is amazingly clear-sighted. That is the difference which makes one the complement of the other. The common quality which brought them together in the holy bonds of matrimony is their mutual candor. **DAVID** is incapable of subtlety, **CHRISTINA** will not bother with it. The result is congen-

iality. So much for **DAVID** and **CHRISTINA**.  
**HESTER** rises

**Hester** Hello!

**David** Eh? Oh, I beg your pardon! The maid said there wasn't anybody home. **Hester** You're David, aren't you? [She advances to meet him.] I'm Hester.

**David** You're not! [He goes quickly toward her and shakes hands as **CHRISTINA** enters.] Well! [He turns, smiling broadly to **CHRISTINA**.] Look, Chris! Here's Hester who's going to marry my brother Rob.

**Christina** [with the most charming warmth] Isn't she lovely!

**Hester** Oh, I think you're dears, both of you! [The two women kiss.] Aren't you hours ahead of time?

**Christina** We caught the one o'clock instead of whatever the other was.

**David** Where are Mother and Rob?

**Hester** Your mother's drinking tea at. Aren't there some people named Donohue?

**David** Great friends of Mother's. Why aren't you there?

**Hester** Not allowed. I'm having a breakdown.

**Christina** Why don't you telephone her, Dave? She'll want to know that you're here.

**David** She'll find out soon enough. Where's Rob?

**Hester** Gone skating.

**David** [turns to the window] On the pond? No. There's no one on the pond.

**Hester** Somewhere else, then.

**Christina** [hovering over the fire] Dave, do you suppose I could get some tea? I'm half frozen.

**David** Of course you can. I'll order it. [To **HESTER**.] What's the maid's name?

**Hester** Delia.

**David** Delia. It used to be Hannah, and before that it was Stacia, who got married to our old coachman, Fred. Well, it's not so bad to be home again!

[**ROBERT** enters, very much dressed for skating, and carrying his skates. **ROBERT** only faintly suggests his brother. He is more volatile, and stammers slightly.]

*Robert* [a shout] Dave!

*David* Hello, Robert!

[*They shake hands vigorously*]

We were just wondering when you'd come in, and Hester said .

*Hester* [speaking at the same time] Wasn't it lucky I was here to receive them?

*Robert* [as he shakes CHRISTINA's hand] I think this is simply magnificent! [As he strips off his skating things] How did you get here so soon? We weren't expecting you for

*David* We caught the one o'clock.

*Christina* Just

*David* We thought it would be fun to surprise you

*Robert* Mother'll drop dead in her tracks

*David* How is she?

*Robert* Oh, she's in fine form . . . [To CHRISTINA] You'll adore her.

*Christina* I'm sure I shall

*Robert* She is marvellous, isn't she, Hester?

*Hester* She is indeed . . . Perfectly marvellous!

*David* Mother's immense And I'm glad, for Chris's sake, that things worked out this way First Chris sees the old house Then she meets Hester Then Rob comes breezing in, full of health And, last of all, Mother comes

*Robert* It's like a play I always want things to be like a play Don't you, Hester?

*Hester* I dunno Why?

*Robert* Don't you, Christina? [But he does not wait for an answer—a habit with him in his better humored moments] You have to tell us you like this old house, you know Mother and I wouldn't change it for the world

*Christina* [smiling as she looks around her] How about that tea, Dave?

*David* Excuse me, Chris! I forgot . . .

*Christina* [to ROBERT] I've been here three minutes, and I'm ordering food already!

*Robert* Well, let me "do the honors"

*David* Honors, hell! Isn't Julia still in the kitchen?

*Robert* Sure she is

*David* Well, I must see Julia! [He goes]

*Robert* [to CHRISTINA] Julia'll drop dead, too I expect half the town'll be dropping dead Dave's always been the Greek god around this place, you know

*Hester* He should be.

*Robert* I can remember the time I didn't think so

[A door slams MRS PHELPS is heard talking in the hall, excitedly]

*Mrs Phelps* Those bags! Have they come, Delia?

*Hester* Here's your mother now.

*Christina* So soon? How nice!

[MRS PHELPS enters She is pretty, distinguished, stoutish, soft, disarming and, in short, has everything one could possibly ask, including a real gift for looking years younger than her age, which is well past fifty She boasts a reasonable amount of conventional culture, no great amount of intellect, a superabundant vitality, perfect health, and a prattling spirit At the moment she is still wearing her hat and furs and she looks wildly about her]

*Mrs Phelps* Dave! Dave, boy! Where are you, Dave? Where are you? It's Mother, Dave! [She does not see him in the room, and she is already turning back to the hall without a word or a look for anybody else] Where are you, Dave? Come here this minute! Don't you hear me, Dave? It's Mother! [DAVID appears in the hall] Oh, Dave!

*David* [a little abashed by the vigor of this welcome] Hello, Mother

*Mrs Phelps* Dave, is it really you?

*David* Guess it must be, Mother

*Mrs Phelps* Dave, dear! [She envelops as much of him as she can possibly reach]

*David* [prying loose] Well! Glad to see us, Mother?

*Mrs Phelps* Glad!

*David* You certainly seem to be glad. . . But you haven't spoken to . . .

[CHRISTINA, at his look, steps forward]

*Mrs Phelps* [still not seeing her] To think I wasn't here!

*David* We're ahead of time, you know Christina

*Mrs Phelps* I must have known somehow Something just made me put down my cup and rush home But you're not looking badly You are well, aren't you? I do believe you've put on weight You must be careful, though, not to take cold this weather Was the crossing awfully rough? Were you seasick? You haven't been working too hard, have you, Dave, boy?

*Christina* [unable to stand on one foot]

any longer] He hasn't been working at all Not for weeks!

Mrs Phelps [*she turns at the sound of the strange voice*] Eh? Oh!

David I've been trying to make you take notice of Christina, Mother

Mrs Phelps [*with the utmost warmth*] Oh, my dear Christina, I am sorry! [*She kisses CHRISTINA on both cheeks*] Seeing this big boy again quite took me off my feet Let me look at *you*, now Why, Dave, she's splendid Perfectly splendid! I always knew Dave would choose only the best Didn't I always say so, Dave, boy? [*Which takes her back to DAVID*] Dave, you have been working too hard I don't like those circles under your eyes

David Nonsense, Mother!

Christina I think he looks pretty well

Mrs Phelps But only pretty well I can't help worrying about these big boys of mine [*Her emotion stops her She turns gallantly to ROBERT*] Did you skate, Rob?

Robert As a matter of fact, I couldn't They've been cutting ice on the pond and it's full of holes

Mrs Phelps I must have signs put up tomorrow Remember that, everybody If any of you do go out in this freezing cold, don't take the short cut across the pond

Dave, boy, this is too good to be true After two whole years away and five, nearly six months married

[*The maid brings tea*]

David Here's tea

Mrs Phelps Sit down here beside me, dear, dear Christina And, Dave, boy, sit over there where I can see you Just take my furs, Delia, so I can do my duty in comfort My boy, my boy, you don't know you don't know how happy I am to have you home again! Just hand me my salts, will you, Robin? This excitement has laid me out Christina, my dear, how do you take your tea?

[*She sits at the table ROBIN has fetched her bottle of "Crown Lavender" from somewhere She motions him to put it down, and proceeds to pour tea*]

Christina Just tea, please As it comes and nothing in it

Mrs Phelps A real tea drinker! I hope my tea stands the test [*She passes CHRISTINA her cup and ceases to take any notice of her whatsoever*] Tea, Dave, boy?

David Please, Mother

Mrs Phelps The same old way?

David Yes

Mrs Phelps Tea, Robin? [*She hands DAVID his cup*]

Robert [*busy passing sandwiches and such*] As usual, please

Mrs Phelps [*very absent-minded about the salts*] Who do you suppose was asking after you yesterday, Dave, boy? Old George, the doorman, down at the bank You remember old George? He's so thrilled about your coming back! And Mrs Donohue's so thrilled! Such a sweet woman! You know, I'm afraid he's drinking again You must run right over early tomorrow morning and let her have a look at you I must have some people in to meet you Some very nice new people who've come here since you went away Named Clay He used to be a publisher in Boston, but he gave it up because he says nobody really cares about good books any more Of course, this house has been a real godsend to him I must give a big dinner for you, Dave, and ask all our old friends I do need your cool head, too, on my business Robin does his best, but he isn't really a business man You remember the American Telephone I bought? Mr Curtin, at the bank, advises me to sell and take my profit, but I don't think so What do you think, Dave, boy?

Hester May I have a cup, please, Mrs Phelps?

Mrs Phelps Hester, my dear, how forgetful of me! How will you have it?

Hester As usual

Mrs Phelps Let me see that's cream and sugar?

Hester Only cream No sugar.

Mrs Phelps Of course Robin, will you give Hester her tea?

Robert [*as he gives HESTER the cup*] You see, we have to take a back seat now

Mrs Phelps A back seat, Robin?

Robert I'm only warning Hester She's got to know what to expect in this family when Dave's around

David Oh, shut up, Rob!

Mrs Phelps [*smiling*] My two beaux! My two jealous beaux!

Robert Oh, well! Dave's out in the great world now, and I'm still the same old homebody I always was Look at him, Mother!

Mrs Phelps [*looking*] Oh, my boy, my boy, if you knew what it means to me to

see all my plans and hopes for you fulfilled  
I've dreamed of your being an architect  
ever since ever since .

*Robert* Ever since he first showed an interest in his blocks

*Mrs Phelps* I have those blocks still, Dave Do you remember them?

*David* Do I remember those blocks!

*Mrs Phelps [solemnly]* You must never forget them, because it's quite true what Robin says and, some day, when you have children of your own, I shall show them the foundation stones of their father's great career If I have one gift, it's the ability to see what people have in them and to bring it out I saw what David had in him, even then And I brought it out

*[She smiles benignly There is a brief pause A quizzical frown contracts CHRISTINA'S brow]*

*Christina* It seems a risky business

*Mrs Phelps [turning with that same start which CHRISTINA'S voice caused before]* What seems a risky business?

*Christina* The way families have of doing that

*Mrs Phelps [setting her tea-cup down a little too deliberately]* What could be more natural?

*Hester [coming to CHRISTINA'S rescue from an abyss of boredom]* I see what Christina means From blocks to architecture is a long guess You might very easily have guessed wrong, you know I had some rabbits, once, and I loved 'em Suppose my family had seen what I had in me, then, and brought me up to be a lion tamer?

*Mrs Phelps [offended]* Really, Hester!

*Hester* Isn't that just what happens to most of us? Christina's job doesn't sound like the kind parents usually pick out for a girl, though

*Robert* I'll say it doesn't

*Christina* My parents did pick it out, though I'm just like the rest

*Hester* Well, it only goes to prove what I was saying Christina might have been a homebody instead of a scientist I might have been a lion tamer If only our parents hadn't had ideas about us!

*David* One guess is as good as another I daresay I wanted to be a fireman What do little girls want to be?

*Hester* Queens

*Christina* Wouldn't it be a pleasant world with nothing but queens and firemen in it!

*Robert* I guess Mother knew She always does know

*Hester* What I say about children is this Have 'em Love 'em And then leave 'em be

*Christina [amused]* I'm not sure that isn't a very profound remark

*Mrs Phelps [making up her mind to investigate this daughter-in-law more closely and, with sudden briskness, taking back the conversation]* Why don't you two great things take the bags upstairs out of the hall?

*David* That's an idea

*Mrs Phelps* Dear Christina's in the little front room, and, Dave, you're in the back in your old room

*David [surprised]* I say, Mother . . . can't we .

*Hester* Don't they want to be together, Mrs Phelps? Let me move out of the guest room and then . . .

*Mrs Phelps* Indeed, I'll do nothing of the sort Hester's here for a rest, and I won't upset her Dave can be perfectly comfortable in his old room and so can Christina in front, and it won't hurt them a bit

*Christina* Of course not

*Hester* But, Mrs Phelps . . .

*Mrs Phelps* Not another word, my dear *[To CHRISTINA]* This child has danced herself into a decline, and she's got to be taken care of

*David* Right

*Robert* Come along, Dave

*Mrs Phelps* Go and supervise, Hester, and leave me to . . . to visit with my new daughter

*[DAVE and ROB go, HESTER following]*

*Hester [as she goes]* But really, David, I might just as well move I didn't think And if you and Christina

*Mrs Phelps [with a broad smile to CHRISTINA]* Now, my dear, let me give you another cup of tea

*Christina* Thank you

*Mrs Phelps* And take your hat off so that I can really see you I've never seen a lady scientist before

*Christina* I hope I'm not so very different from other women

*Mrs Phelps* I've quite got over being afraid of you

*Christina* Afraid of me, Mrs. Phelps?

*Mrs Phelps* Can't you understand that? My big boy sends me a curt cable to say

that he's marrying a charming and talented research geologist

*Christina* Biologist

*Mrs Phelps* Biologist It did sound just the least bit in the world improbable

*Christina* Yes . I can see that

*Mrs Phelps* Now that I know you, though, I'm very proud to have you for a daughter Every woman wants a daughter, you know!

*Christina* You're being very nice to me, *Mrs Phelps*

*Mrs Phelps* It isn't at all hard to be nice to you, my dear Tell me about your tour You went to Sicily?

*Christina* We did, indeed

*Mrs Phelps* Sicily, the home of [She gives herself up to Sicilian emotion]

of all those great ancient . poets and . poets To think of your taking my boy to Sicily where I'd always planned to take him! I've never been, you see How many opportunities we miss! That's what we're always saying of dead people, isn't it? Though, of course, I shouldn't think of calling David dead merely because he's got married I do hope you read *Glorious Apollo* before you went to Venice When I read it, I felt that I had made a new friend I always make such close friends of my books, and, you know, there's no friend like a really good book And there's nothing like a good historical novel to make a city vivid and interesting They do bring things back to one *Glorious Apollo*! What a despicable character that man Byron was! Though I daresay he couldn't have been as bad as he was painted People do exaggerate so Especially writers Do you know *The Little Flowers of St Francis*?

*Christina* I'm afraid not Are they exaggerated?

*Mrs Phelps* Well, of course, they're really fairy tales Only to one with a profoundly religious point of view . . . and, if there's one thing I pride myself on it is my profoundly religious point of view I always keep the *Little Flowers* on the table beside my bed And read in them, you know? I quite brought Robin up on them Dave never took to them Though Dave loved his regular fairy tales His Grimm and his Hans Christian You read, I hope?

*Christina* I can I sometimes have to

*Mrs Phelps* Oh, my dear, I only meant that I think it's so important, for David's

happiness, that you should be what I call "a reader" Both my boys learned their classics at their mother's knee Their Scott and their Thackeray And their Dickens Lighter things too, of course *Treasure Island* and *Little Lord Fauntleroy* And you went to Prague, too Dave wrote me from Prague Such interesting letters, Dave writes! I wondered why you stayed so long in Prague

*Christina* It's a charming city, and an architect's paradise Dave and I thought he ought to look at something besides cathedrals and temples There is domestic architecture, you know

*Mrs Phelps* Yes I suppose there is

*Christina* People do want houses I'm inclined to think houses are more interesting than churches nowadays

*Mrs Phelps* Oh, nowadays! I'm afraid I've very little use for nowadays I've always thought it a pity that Dave and Rob couldn't have grown up in Italy in the Renaissance and known such men as well, as Cellini

*Christina* I'm not sure Cellini would have been the ideal companion for a growing boy

*Mrs Phelps* No? Well, perhaps not I must certainly take in Prague my next trip abroad It's really been very hard for me to stay home these last two years But I said to myself Dave must have his fling I don't like mothers who keep their sons tied to their apron strings I said Dave will come home to me a complete man Though I didn't actually look for his bringing you with him, my dear, and coming home a married man Still . So I stayed home with Robin And I was glad to I'm not sure I haven't sometimes neglected Robin for David Given myself too much to the one, not enough to the other The first born, you know We mothers are human, however much we may try not to be Tell me, Christina, you think David is well, don't you?

*Christina* Yes, perfectly

*Mrs Phelps* He didn't seem quite himself just now

*Christina* Perhaps he was embarrassed

*Mrs Phelps* With me? His own mother?

*Christina* Wouldn't I have accounted for it?

*Mrs Phelps* How silly of me not to remember that! Tell me what your plans are



—if you have any plans, which I hope you haven't, because I've been making so many for you and such perfect ones

*Christina* Well, as a matter of fact, we haven't many, but what we have are pretty definite

*Mrs Phelps* Really! Are they really? What are they?

*Christina* Well, we're going to live in New York, of course

*Mrs Phelps* Why "New York of course"? It seems to me that you might choose a pleasanter place to live than New York

*Christina* No doubt of that, Mrs Phelps But it does seem a good place for Dave to work and .

*Mrs Phelps* Oh, I can't agree with you!

*Christina* I shouldn't have thought there could be two ways about New York for Dave any more than for me

*Mrs Phelps* For you?

*Christina* It's where my appointment is

*Mrs Phelps* Your appointment?

*Christina* At the Rockefeller Institute

*Mrs Phelps* So that's what takes Dave and you to New York? Your geology

*Christina* Partly. Only it isn't geology It's biology

*Mrs Phelps* Of course Geology's about rocks, isn't it?

*Christina* Largely

*Mrs Phelps* And biology?

*Christina* Well—about Life

*Mrs Phelps* [getting it clear] So you're a student of Life, my dear I do wish David had called you that instead of the other

*Christina* I understand how you felt, Mrs Phelps I hope you don't hold my job against me

*Mrs Phelps* [with deep feeling] My dearest Christina I don't! Oh, if you thought that, I should be heart-broken You've made my darling David happy, my dear, and for that I'm prepared to love everything about you Even your job Do you smoke?

*Christina* Yes, thank you May I?

*Mrs Phelps* Please And I shall, too .

[They light cigarettes]

Don't you like my lighter?

*Christina* It's sweet And very handy, I should think

*Mrs Phelps* A friend sent it me from London Let me give it to you

*Christina* Oh, no

*Mrs Phelps* Please! I've not had a

chance yet to give my new daughter anything My dearest Christina . please!

*Christina* Thank you I shall always keep it and use it

*Mrs Phelps* I like the little ceremonial gift . Now, about your job . . .

*Christina* My job?

*Mrs Phelps* As you call it I don't like to say "profession", because that has such a sinister sound for a woman And then science is hardly a profession, is it? Rather more of a hobby You're planning to continue?

*Christina* With my job? Oh, yes

*Mrs Phelps* Just as though you hadn't married, I mean?

*Christina* I have to, don't I? To earn my right to call myself a biologist . . .

*Mrs Phelps* Do people call you that?

*Christina* I guess they call me "doctor"

*Mrs Phelps* You're not a doctor?

*Christina* Technically, I am

*Mrs Phelps* Oh, I can never agree with you that women make good doctors!

*Christina* We shan't have to argue that point I've no intention of practicing

*Mrs Phelps* Not at all? Above all, not on David?

*Christina* I shouldn't think of it

*Mrs Phelps* I remember hearing that doctors never do practice on their own families I remember that when our doctor here had a baby . . of course, his wife had the baby he called in quite an outsider to deliver the child I remember how that struck me at the time Tell me more about yourself, my dear When Dave cabled me about meeting you and marrying you so suddenly .

*Christina* It wasn't so sudden, Mrs Phelps I spent a good six or seven months turning him down flat

*Mrs Phelps* [offended] Indeed?

*Christina* Dave and I met in Rome last winter Then he came to Heidelberg, where I was working, and I accepted him I'd never given him the least encouragement before

*Mrs Phelps* [as before] Indeed?

*Christina* We were married straight off and went to Sicily

*Mrs Phelps* I didn't know about the preliminaries Dave never told me And now you're taking him off to New York!

*Christina* Please don't put it that way

*Mrs Phelps* I'm stating a fact, my dear

girl After all, you have got your—[She gets it right this time] biology to think of

*Christina* You can't blame me for that, dear Mrs Phelps, so long as I think of Dave's work, too

*Mrs Phelps* No . . . So long as you do that How did you come to select your career?

*Christina* My father was a doctor I grew up in his hospital Everything followed quite naturally

*Mrs Phelps* Your father—is he living?

*Christina* He died two years ago Tragically, but rather splendidly

*Mrs Phelps* How?

*Christina* He'd been experimenting for years on infantile paralysis and

*Mrs Phelps* And he died of that?

[CHRISTINA nods rather solemnly]  
*Is your mother living?*

*Christina* Oh, yes, at home.

*Mrs Phelps* At home?

*Christina* In Omaha

*Mrs Phelps* [meditatively] Omaha

*Christina* Yes

*Mrs Phelps* Hm And you'll go on with your father's experiments?

*Christina* Oh, no! That's not at all in my line

*Mrs Phelps* What is your line?

*Christina* It's hard to say I did some rather hard work this last year at Heidelberg on the embryos of chickens In the egg, you know

*Mrs Phelps* For heaven's sake, what for?

*Christina* Trying to find out something about what makes growth stop

*Mrs Phelps* Why ?

*Christina* Curiosity, I guess Now I'm admitting what low people we scientists are I think that curiosity's all we have And a little training

*Mrs Phelps* Does David follow your work?

*Christina* No And I don't expect him to

*Mrs Phelps* Quite right David wouldn't be appealed to by rotten eggs Not that he couldn't understand them if they did appeal to him

*Christina* Of course

*Mrs Phelps* Isn't the Rockefeller Institute one of those places where they practice vivisection?

*Christina* One of many Yes . . .

*Mrs Phelps* Have you . . .

*Christina* What?

*Mrs Phelps* Experimented on animals?

*Christina* Isn't it a part of my job? Dave understands that You must try to understand it

*Mrs Phelps* Very well, I shall try, my dear Now you must listen to me and try to understand me . . Look at me What do you see? Simply—David's mother I can't say of you that you're simply David's wife, because, clearly, you're many things beside that But I am simply his mother I think, as I talk to you, that I belong to a dead age I wonder if you think that? In my day, we considered a girl immensely courageous and independent who taught school or gave music lessons Nowadays, girls sell real estate and become scientists and think nothing of it Give us our due, Christina We weren't entirely bustles and smelling salts, we girls who did not go into the world We made a great profession which I fear may be in some danger of vanishing from the face of the earth We made a profession of motherhood That may sound old-fashioned to you Believe me, it had its value I was trained to be a wife that I might become a mother

[CHRISTINA is about to protest Mrs Phelps stops her]

Your father died of his investigations of a dangerous disease You called that splendid of him, didn't you? Would you say less of us who gave our lives to being mothers? Mothers of sons, particularly Listen to me, Christina David was five, Rob only a little baby, when my husband died I'd been married six years, not so very happily I was pretty, as a girl, too Very pretty

[Thus thought holds her for a second]

For twenty-four years, since my husband died, I've given all my life, all my strength to Dave and Rob They've been my life and my job They've taken the place of husband and friends both, for me Where do I stand, now? Rob is marrying Dave is married already This is the end of my life and my job

Oh, I'm not asking for credit or praise I'm asking for something more substantial I'm asking you, my dear, dear Christina, not to take all my boy's heart Leave me, I beg you, a little, little part of it I've earned that much I'm not sure I couldn't say that you owe me that much—as David's mother I believe I've deserved it Don't you think I have?

*Christina* [deeply moved] My dear, dear Mrs Phelps!

*Mrs Phelps* It's agreed then, isn't it, that I'm not to be shut out?

*Christina* Of course you're not!

*Mrs Phelps* Not by you, Christina. Nor by your work?

*Christina* No! No!

*Mrs Phelps* Nor by anything?

*Christina*. You must know that I should never come between a mother and her son. You must know that I appreciate what you've done for Dave and all you've always been and meant to him. You *must* know that!

*Mrs Phelps* Christina, my dear, you're a very disarming person. You are indeed. I've known you ten minutes and unloaded my whole heart to you.

*Christina* I'm proud that you trust me.

*Mrs Phelps* [patting her hand], Thank you, my dear. And now . . . now that you know how I feel . . . now you won't go to New York, will you? You won't take Dave to New York?

*Christina* [drawing back in alarm] But, Mrs Phelps!

*Mrs Phelps* Because that *would* be coming between mother and son, as you just now said. That could mean only one thing—crowding me out, setting me aside, robbing me.

*Christina* [completely baffled] You're quite mistaken, Mrs Phelps! You've no reason to think any such thing!

*Mrs Phelps* Well, it's nice of you to reassure me, and we don't have to worry about it for some time yet. You'll have plenty of time to see how carefully I've worked everything out for David—and for you, too, my dear. You've a nice, long visit ahead, and . . .

*Christina* I only wish we *had* a nice long visit, Mrs Phelps.

*Mrs Phelps* What do you mean?

*Christina* I start work at the Institute a week from tomorrow.

*Mrs Phelps* [staggered] What are you saying, child?

*Christina* We didn't even bring our trunks up, you know.

*Mrs Phelps* [recovering herself] I'll not hear of it! A week of David after two years without him? What are you thinking of? Don't you realize that David has prac-

tically been my sole companion for nearly twenty-five years?

*Christina* You've had Robert, too.

*Mrs Phelps* I'm not thinking so much of Robert, now. He isn't threatened as David is.

*Christina* Threatened, Mrs Phelps?

*Mrs Phelps* I don't want to see David's career sacrificed.

*Christina* But I'm not planning to sacrifice it.

*Mrs Phelps* You make the word sound disagreeable. I admire your work, Christina, but I am very clearly of the impression that it may easily obliterate David's work.

*Christina* I don't see any conflict.

*Mrs Phelps* Aren't you taking him to New York, which he simply loathes? To live in a stuffy tenement . . . well, an apartment . . . They're the same thing. Without proper heat or sunshine or food? I told you I'd made plans. I've arranged everything for David's best interest. I can't believe that a girl of your intelligence won't realize how good my arrangements are. I happen to own a very large tract of land here. A very beautiful tract, most desirable for residences. To the north of the Country Club just beside the links. Hilly and wooded. You can see it, off there to the left of the pond. I've had many offers for it, most advantageous offers. But I've held on to it, ever since Dave chose his profession. Pleasant Valley, it's called. I shall change the name to Phelps Manor, and open it. David will have charge. David will lay out the streets, design the gateways, build the houses and make his fortune, his reputation, and his place in the world out of it.

*Christina* [after a pause] Don't you mean his place in this part of the world, Mrs Phelps?

*Mrs Phelps* [positively] As well this as any. With me to back him, he's certain of a proper start here, and there can't be any doubt about the outcome. His success is assured here and his happiness and prosperity with it. And yours, too. Don't you see that?

*Christina* It certainly sounds safe enough.

*Mrs Phelps* I knew you'd see. Furthermore, he's never happy in New York.

*Christina* Happiness is very important.

Only different people have different ideas of it

*Mrs Phelps* David's always had my ideas And they're very sound ones

*Christina* [*politely*] I'm sure of it But perhaps they aren't sound for David I mean, from what I know of him

*Mrs Phelps* I'm David's mother, my dear I know him better than you do

*Christina* I wonder!

*Mrs Phelps* Oh, I do! And I know how little New York has to offer I know the competition there I know what the struggle would be Look at the choice On the one hand obscurity, a desk in some other man's office, years of hack work and discouragement On the other, immediate prominence, unquestionable success . . .

*Christina* With his mother behind him

*Mrs Phelps* Who better?

*Christina* Oh, I see the difference!

*Mrs Phelps* Yes, don't you! And as to your work, my dear, I'm sure we can keep you busy and contented

*Christina* [*smiling in spite of herself*] How will you do that?

*Mrs Phelps* Well, it's hard to say, off-hand But if we really set our minds to it

I know! I'm the chairman of our hospital here, and I have a great deal of influence with the doctors We've a beautiful laboratory You couldn't ask for anything nicer or cleaner or more comfortable than that laboratory You do your work in a laboratory, I suppose?

*Christina* Usually

*Mrs Phelps* I'll take you down in the morning and introduce you to Dr McClintock, homeopathic, but very agreeable, and he'll show you our laboratory We've just got in a new microscope, too Oh, a very fine one! One the High School didn't want any more You'll simply love our laboratory Oh, you will! It has a splendid new sink with hot and cold running water and quite a good gas stove, because it's also the nurses' washroom and diet kitchen And you'll be allowed to putter around as much as you like whenever it isn't in use by the nurses or the real doctors I can arrange everything perfectly, my dear I'm certain that, when you see our laboratory, you'll sit right down and write to Mr Rockefeller, who, I'm told, is a very kind old man at heart, and won't misunderstand in the least, that you've found an opening

here that's ever so much more desirable than his old Institute, where you won't be obliged to cut up cats and dogs You will think it over, won't you? Going to New York, I mean Taking Dave to New York and ruining all his prospects?

*Christina* [*after a pause, in all sincere kindness*] Mrs Phelps, the third time I refused Dave, he asked me for a reason I told him I couldn't throw myself away on a big frog in a small puddle

*Mrs Phelps* You don't mean that you want him to be a small frog, a mere polliwog, in a great ocean like New York?

*Christina* I'm afraid that's just what I do mean And when he came back at me three months later with some real sketches and a great deal more humility and with a real job in a real architect's office

*Mrs Phelps* Has David a job? In New York?

*Christina* A chance anyway With Michaels

*Mrs Phelps* Michaels?

*Christina* He's a big man And he's interested in Dave.

*Mrs Phelps* I don't approve at all I think it's madness

*Christina* You may be right But, isn't it best left to Dave and me?

*Mrs Phelps* [*deeply hurt at the implication*] My dear Christina, if you think I'm trying to interfere, you're quite mistaken You're very unfair . . . Only tell me what makes you so sure Dave can succeed in New York.

*Christina* I haven't given a thought to whether he'll succeed or not That depends on his own talent, doesn't it? As to how much he makes, or how we get on, at first, I don't think that matters either so long as Dave stands really on his own feet

*Mrs Phelps* Oh, Christina, be honest with yourself You are sacrificing David!

*Christina* How?

*Mrs Phelps* By thinking only of yourself, of course

*Christina* Won't you believe that I'm thinking of both of us?

*Mrs Phelps* How can I? It's too bad of you, really It means—[*in despair*] it means that it's all been for nothing!

*Christina* What has?

*Mrs Phelps* [*crescendo, as she walks about*] All, all that I've done for David and given up for him and meant to him!

*Christina* How can you say that?

*Mrs Phelps* I did so want to be friendly with David's wife. If you knew how I've wished and dreamt and prayed for that!

*Christina* [*rising herself*]. But can't we be friends?

*Mrs Phelps* Some day you'll have a child of your own and then you may know what I mean, if . . .

*Christina* If what?

*Mrs Phelps* [*as a last volley*]. If you don't sacrifice your child, too, to this work of yours

*Christina* [*deeply distressed*]. Mrs Phelps, I wish you wouldn't feel that. It makes me feel that I've got off on a very wrong foot here

[*ROBERT enters*]

*Robert* Christina!

*Christina* Yes?

*Robert* Dave says, if you want a bath before dinner, you'd better be quick about it.

*Christina* I didn't know it was so late. Thanks [*She goes to MRS PHELPS*]. You'll see that I do understand, dear Mrs Phelps. You'll see that it all comes straight somehow and turns out for the best. Life takes care of such things. All we have to do is to keep out of life's way and make the best of things as *healthily* as possible.

*Mrs Phelps* You think I'm selfish.

*Christina* Oh, no! I don't think anything of the sort!

*Mrs Phelps* Because if there's one thing I pride myself on,—I may have many faults,—but I am not selfish. I haven't a selfish hair in my head.

*Christina* I tell you, I understand [*She kisses her quickly and goes out*].

*Robert* [*looking curiously after CHRISTINA*]. Mother!

*Mrs Phelps* [*wildly*]. Oh, Robin! I'm so lonely! So lonely!

*Robert* [*startled*]. Mother!

*Mrs Phelps* I'm afraid I'm a dreadful coward!

*Robert* You, Mother?

*Mrs Phelps* I ought to have been prepared to lose my two great, splendid sons. I've told myself over and over again that the time would come, and now that it has come, I can't face it! She's taking Dave away to New York, away from me, away from all the wonderful plans I've made for him here!

*Robert* Well, if Dave's fool enough to go!

*Mrs Phelps* I shouldn't do to any woman on earth what she's doing to me!

*Robert* Of course you wouldn't. But then, Christina isn't your sort, is she?

*Mrs Phelps* You've noticed that, too?

*Robert* Who is your sort, Mother? . . . Oh, it's a wonderful gift you've given us.

*Mrs Phelps* What's that, Robin?

*Robert* A wonderful ideal of womanhood. You know what I mean.

*Mrs Phelps* No. What?

*Robert*. Your own marvellous self, Mother!

*Mrs Phelps* Dave didn't stop to think of any such ideal, did he?

*Robert* Oh, Dave!

*Mrs Phelps* Perhaps I shouldn't be hurt. But you can't know what it is to be a mother. I nearly died when Dave was born. Hours and hours I suffered for him, trapped in agony. He was a twelve-pound baby, you know. If I could be sure of his happiness!

*Robert* You mustn't ask too much.

*Mrs Phelps* You're right. No mother should expect any woman to love her son as she loves him.

*Robert* Your sons' don't expect any woman to love them as you do.

*Mrs Phelps* Oh, Robin! Is that how you feel?

*Robert* I think it must be.

[*She looks at him, watching him think it all out*].

It's a funny business, isn't it? After a woman like you has suffered the tortures of the damned bringing us into the world, and worked like a slave to help us grow up in it, we can't wait to cut loose and give up the one thing we can be sure of! And for what? To run every known risk of disillusion and disappointment.

*Mrs Phelps* [*struck by this*]. What is the one thing you can be sure of, Robin?

*Robert* You are. Don't you know that? Why can't we leave well enough alone?

*Mrs Phelps* Presently you'll be going too, Rob.

*Robert* Yes . . . I know I shall . . . But nothing will ever come between us, Mother.

*Mrs. Phelps* Come over here by the fire, Robin, and let's forget all these unpleasant things [*She goes to sit by the*].

fire] Let's have a real old-time talk about nothing at all Sit down

[He sits as directed on a stool at her feet]

Head in my lap! [He obeys]

So! This has shown me something I've always suspected That you are *my* son David takes after his father

Robert Mother!

Mrs Phelps Tell me, Robin, what you meant just now when you said that about the one thing you can be sure of Did you mean that you've had dark thoughts about your future?

Robert I must have meant something of the sort

Mrs Phelps Hm . . . It was dear of you, my great Robin, to say what you did about my being your ideal You know my dream has always been to see my two boys married and settled down But happily! Happily! Has Hester come to any decision about where she wants to spend her honeymoon?

Robert Abroad

Mrs Phelps Nothing more definite than just "abroad"?

Robert No She doesn't care where we go

Mrs Phelps That seems very odd to me I took such an interest in my honeymoon Why, your father and I had every day of it planned, weeks before we were married . Hester hasn't picked out her flat silver yet, either, has she?

Robert I don't think so

Mrs Phelps I can't understand it!

Robert What?

Mrs Phelps Her indifference It rather shocks me [She notices that ROBERT is shocked, too] But I suppose I'm old-fashioned Like this room You must give me a little of your time and taste, Robin, before you're married, and advise me about doing this room over

Robert [eagerly] Have you come to that at last?

Mrs Phelps I'm afraid so How's Hester planning to do your new home?

Robert [his spirits subsiding at once] Oh, I don't know

Mrs Phelps You don't mean to say she hasn't made any plans?

Robert I've been trying to get her interested in house-hunting

Mrs Phelps And she doesn't care about that either?

Robert She says anything will suit her Mrs Phelps Does she, indeed! Most girls . . . most normal girls, that is, look forward so to having their homes to receive their friends in

Robert She leaves it all to me She says I know much more about such things than she does

Mrs Phelps How little she understands my poor Robin who ought never to be bothered!

Robert Oh, well!

Mrs Phelps Do you happen to know if Hester has many friends? I mean, many men friends? Did she have lots of suitors beside you?

Robert I daresay she had loads.

Mrs Phelps Do you know that she had?

Robert She never told me so Why?

Mrs Phelps I was wondering She's been out two years One does wonder how much a girl has been sought after But, then, why should she have bothered with others when she thought she could land you? You are rather a catch, you know.

Robert I, Mother?

Mrs Phelps Any girl would set her cap for you

Robert I don't believe Hester did that

Mrs Phelps My dear, I wasn't saying that she did! But why shouldn't she? Only .

Robert Only what?

Mrs Phelps I can't help wondering if Hester's feeling for you is as strong as you think it is [ROBERT wonders, too] I've been wondering for some time, Robin. I've hesitated to speak to you about it. But after what you've just told me . . .

Robert Well, it's too late to worry now.

Mrs Phelps I can't help worrying, though Marriage is such an important step, and you're such a sensitive, shrinking character It would be too terrible if you had to go through what you were just speaking of—the disillusionment and disappointment

. I'm only trying to find out what it is that's come between you two young people

Robert. Nothing has, Mother Hester isn't you, that's all!

Mrs Phelps Nonsense, Robin! . . . It isn't that awful woman I was so worried about when you were at Harvard?

Robert I'm not raising a second crop of wild oats

Mrs Phelps. Then it must be that risk

you were speaking of! Oh, why do boys run that risk! Why will they break away!

*Robert* I wish I knew!

*Mrs Phelps* Perhaps your trouble is that —[after a pause, very low] that you don't love Hester

*Robert* Oh, love! I must love her or I wouldn't have asked her to marry me I guess she loves me in her way Is her way enough? I'll find that out in time A man ought to marry

*Mrs Phelps* [a little more positively] You don't love Hester, and it isn't fair to her!

*Robert* Yes I do love her! Only I wonder if I'm the marrying kind Failing the possibility of marrying you I mean your double

*Mrs Phelps* [always increasing] You don't love Hester

*Robert* I do, I tell you! Who could help loving her? I mean . . . Good God, what do I mean?

*Mrs Phelps* Either you don't love Hester or Hester doesn't love you

*Robert* She does love me

*Mrs Phelps* She may say she does, but I haven't seen her showing it

*Robert* Mother!

*Mrs Phelps* You don't love Hester and Hester doesn't love you It's as simple as that, Robin, and you're making a very grave mistake to go on with this These things may be painful, but they're better faced before than after Children come after, Robin, and then it's too late! Think, Robin! Think before it's too late! And remember, the happiness of three people is at stake!

*Robert* Hester's and mine and .

*Mrs Phelps* And mine! And mine! . Only, I was wrong to say that! You must put my fate out of your mind just as Dave has done Let Dave find out for himself what he's done She won't be able to hold him She won't have time for a home and children She won't take any more interest in him than Hester takes in you But you, Robin, you can still be saved! I want to save you from throwing yourself away as Dave has. You will face the facts, won't you?

*Robert* You mean . . . I'm to . . . to break with Hester?

*Mrs Phelps* You will be a man?

*Robert* [after a pause] Well . . . I'll . . . I'll try, Mother.

*Mrs Phelps* [after a pause] When?

*Robert* Well . . . the . . . the first chance I get

*Mrs Phelps* [trying not to appear eager] Tonight? . . . You'll have your chance tonight, Robin I'll see that you get it Promise me to take it?

*Robert* [after a pause] All right. . . If you think I'd better . . . All right. . .

*Mrs Phelps* Oh, thank God for this confidence between us! Thank God I've saved my boy one more tumble! You'll see it won't be so bad to put up with your mother a little longer! You'll see I've still plenty to give you and to do for you!

*Robert* My blessed, blessed mother!

*Mrs Phelps* [unable to repress her triumph] And I won't have to be lonely now! I won't have to be lonely!

*Robert* No, Mother! No! [He takes her in his arms]

*Mrs Phelps* Kiss me

[He does, on the lips, fervently DAVID comes in, dressed for dinner]

*David* Hello! That's a pretty picture!

Chris'll be down in a minute

*Robert*. Where's Hester?

*David* In Chris's room I heard them giggling in there Isn't it grand they've hit it off so well?

*Robert* [meeting his mother's eyes] Isn't it? I'll make a cocktail [He goes]

*David* You like Christina, don't you, Mother?

*Mrs Phelps* Didn't you know I should?

*David* Sure I did! After all, I couldn't have gone far wrong on a wife, could I? I mean, having you for a mother would make most girls look pretty cheesey I waited a long time And all the time I was waiting for Chris! You'll see how wonderful Chris is Why, she gets better every day I don't know how I ever pulled it off I swear I don't I certainly had luck.

*Mrs Phelps* You're happy?

*David* You bet I'm happy!

*Mrs Phelps* You're not going to let your happiness crowd me out entirely, are you, Dave, boy?

*David* [amiably irritated] Oh, Mother! Lay off!

[ROBERT returns with shaker and cocktail glasses]



Robert This is just a preliminary,  
Mother We both need it, before we dress

Mrs Phelps Perhaps we do

David Shan't we call Chris and Hester?

Mrs Phelps No! Just we three!

Robert It'll never be we three any more  
I heard them coming as I crossed the hall  
[He pours the cocktail into the glasses and  
goes about passing them]

Mrs Phelps My two boys! My big one  
and my little one!

David [calls out] Hurry up, Chris!

Mrs Phelps If I can keep the little cor-  
ner Christina doesn't need, Dave that's  
all I ask

David Don't you worry, Mother

[CHRISTINA and HESTER enter They are  
both dressed appropriately for the  
evening CHRISTINA is particularly  
lovely]

Here we are!

Christina Thank you, Robert

[They sip their cocktails]

David Chris!

Christina Yes?

David Let's tell Mother

Christina Now? In front of everybody?

David It won't hurt 'em to hear

Christina I don't mind, if they don't

Robert Mind what?

David It'll make Mother so happy

Mrs Phelps What will?

David A surprise Chris and I have got  
to spring on you!

Mrs Phelps How nice! What is it?

Christina [a smiling pause—then] In  
about four months I'm going to have a  
baby!

Hester Oh, Christina, how wonderful!

Robert Are you really!

David Isn't that a grand surprise,  
Mother?

Mrs Phelps [recovering as from a body  
blow] Of course David I'm very glad,  
my dear Very glad Have you a nap-  
kin there, Robin? I've spilled my cocktail  
all over my dress

## ACT TWO

### SCENE ONE

The living-room again It is the same eve-  
ning, after supper The lamps are lighted  
MRS PHELPS, HESTER, CHRISTINA, DAVID,  
and ROB are all present CHRISTINA, HESTER,

and DAVID are dressed as we saw them at  
the end of the first act ROB wears his din-  
ner coat, and his mother has changed to a  
simple evening dress They have only just  
finished their coffee, and MRS PHELPS is  
busily showing a collection of photographs  
which she has in a great Indian basket be-  
side her chair

Christina What were you doing in the  
sailor suit, Dave?

David Dancing the hornpipe, I believe

Mrs Phelps [fondly] That was at Miss  
Briggs's dancing school Do you remember  
Miss Briggs, David?

David Do I! The hornpipe must have  
been something special, Mother

Mrs Phelps I see that I've marked it  
"Masonic Temple, April 6th, 1904"

David It must have been special They  
don't usually dance hornpipes in Masonic  
Temples

Christina Did Miss Briggs teach you to  
be graceful, Dave?

David She did indeed As a boy I was a  
gazelle But I got over it

Christina I'm just as glad I've known  
one or two adult gazelles

Mrs Phelps Both David and Robin  
danced beautifully

David I haven't thought of Miss Briggs  
for years I remember her so well She  
seemed so old to me She must have been  
old, too A good deal older than God She  
looked it, in spite of her red hair and her  
castanets Spain, she used to say, is the land  
of the dance

Mrs Phelps She had all the nicest chil-  
dren

David Castanets and Spanish shawls  
and a police whistle She blew the whistle at  
the boys for running and sliding God knows  
what dances she taught us Very different  
from the steps you indulge in, Hester, with  
your low modern tastes

Hester Running and sliding sounds very  
pleasant

David We thought that up for ourselves

Mrs Phelps. How long ago that all  
seems! [She shows another photograph]  
This is David when he was ten weeks old.

Christina Oh, David!

Hester Let me see

[CHRISTINA shows her]  
What a darling baby! Did they always sit  
them in shells in those days?



*Mrs Phelps* [just a little coldly] It was a fashion, like any other

*Christina* David on the half shell!

*Hester* Have you ever noticed how much all babies look like Chief Justice Taft?

*Mrs Phelps* [taking the photographs back in ill-concealed irritation] David was a beautiful child

*David* I didn't always sit in shells  
Mother's got one of me on a white fur rug

*Mrs Phelps* It hangs over my bed to this day

*Christina* In the nude?

*David* No In an undershirt.

[HESTER giggles]

*Mrs Phelps* Fashions change

*Christina* I suppose they must David wouldn't think of being photographed in his undershirt, now Let me see the picture again, Mrs Phelps

*Mrs Phelps* I think that's enough for this evening [She rises, in great dignity, to put the photographs aside]

*Christina* Dear Mrs Phelps, please don't be angry We were only teasing David They're awfully interesting pictures

*Mrs Phelps* Only interesting to me, I'm afraid

*Christina* Not at all I loved them Do show me some more, Mrs Phelps Are there many more?

*Mrs Phelps* [still stern about them] Dave and Robin were photographed twice every month until they were twelve years old

*Hester* [calculating rapidly] Good Lord! That makes over two hundred and fifty of each!

*Mrs Phelps* I never counted I used to study their photographs, month by month, just as I did their weight I wasn't satisfied to watch only their bodies grow I wanted a record of the development of their little minds and souls as well I could compare the expression of Dave's eyes, for instance, at nine, with their expression at eight and a half, and see the increased depth And I was never disappointed

*Hester* I knew a mother once who called her son "her beautiful black swan"

*Mrs Phelps* I should never have called either of my sons by such a name!

*Robert* I can remember when you used to call us your Arab steeds!

*Mrs Phelps* [furious] Only in fun Will you put them away, Robin?

[ROBERT takes the photographs]

*Robert* Sure you don't want to go through the rest, Mother?

*Mrs Phelps* I'm afraid of boring Christina Christina has other interests, of course Higher interests than her husband Higher even than children, I suspect

[There is an abashed, awful pause, at this CHRISTINA looks hurt and baffled HESTER is horrified DAVID, puzzled, rises and goes to the window.

ROBERT smiles to himself as he stows the photographs away]

*Hester* [breaking out] Well, of all the

[CHRISTINA, catching her eye, stops her]

*Mrs Phelps* [polite, but dangerous] What was it you were about to say, Hester?

*Hester* [recovering herself none too expertly] I was just looking at Christina's dress I was just going to say "Well, of all the lovely dresses I ever saw, that's the loveliest"

*Christina* It is nice, isn't it? I got it in Paris From Poiret Dave made me

*Mrs Phelps* [as she studies the dress] I've a little woman right here in town who does well enough for me I know who that dress would look well on! Dave, you remember Clara Judd? Such an exquisite figure, Clara had, and such distinction! That dress wants distinction and a figure You might wear it, too, Hester

[There is another painful pause CHRISTINA is really crushed]

*David* [desperately snatching for a change of subject] Look, Chris! The moon's up You can see the kids coasting down the long hill

*Christina* [joining him at the window gratefully] If I weren't all dressed up, I'd join them!

*Hester* Don't you love coasting?

*Christina* [nodding] Once last winter we had a big snowfall at Heidelberg I'd been all day in the laboratory, I remember, straining my eyes out at a scarlet fever culture for our bacteriology man Krauss, his name was They called him "The Demon of the Neckar" The theory was that he used to walk along the river bank, thinking up cruel things to say to his students I never knew such a terrifying man . Well, this day I'm talking about, I came out of Krauss's laboratory into the snow Into

Grimm's fairy tales, as Dave knows, because Dave's seen Heidelberg. Another bacteriologist, a dear boy from Marburg, came with me. We looked at the snow, and we wanted to coast. . . We found a small boy with a very large sled and we rented it, with the boy, who wouldn't trust us not to steal it. We certainly coasted. We got so ardent, we took the funicular up the Schlossberg and coasted down from there. The lights came out along the Neckar, and the snow turned the colors and colors snow can turn and still we coasted. . . Presently, we had an accident. A bob turned over in front of us with an old man on it. We couldn't stop, and so we just hit the bob and the old man, and you know how that is when you're going fast! . . . We picked ourselves up—or, rather, dug ourselves out—and went to see if we'd hurt the old fellow, and, God save us, it was Krauss himself! . . . I don't mind telling you our hearts sank. We stood there petrified. But we needn't have worried. Krauss didn't mind. He smiled the sweetest smile—you'd never have suspected he had it in him!—and touched his cap like a little boy and apologized for his clumsiness. "My age hasn't improved my skill," he said. . . I could have kissed him. I wasn't quite sure how he'd have taken that, so, instead, I asked him to join us. He was delighted. We kept it up for another hour, we two students and the great god Krauss. "Jugend ist Trunkenheit ohne Wein!" he said. I daresay he was quoting a poem. He couldn't have been a day under seventy. Three months later, he died of an incoperable internal tumor. In his notes, they found an observation he had written on his condition that very day we coasted. Think of a man who could write observations on his approaching death and then go off to coast afterwards! It's what life can be and should be. It's the difference between life and self.

*Mrs Phelps* Hm!

*Hester* I think that's the most marvellous story I've ever heard!

*Robert* Isn't it marvellous?

*Hester* I wish I'd known such a man!

*Christina* Do you remember the night we coasted in Heidelberg, Dave?

*David* Do I? [*To his mother*] Chris means the night she accepted me!

*Mrs Phelps* Does she really?

*David* [*dashed, and giving it up*] Yeah

Let's go outside and watch the kids, Chris. It'll do us good.

*Christina* [*seeing his point*] Right! I'd love to!

[*They go*]

*Mrs Phelps* I'm beginning to wonder if Christina's studies at Heidelberg haven't made her just the least little bit in the world pro-German.

*Hester* Mrs Phelps, how can you say such a thing!

[*HESTER looks from ROBERT to his mother in amazement. MRS PHELPS sits down at the piano and begins to play the easier portions of one of Chopin's nocturnes*]

I think that was simply inspiring!

*Mrs. Phelps* I can't play Chopin if you interrupt me, Hester.

*Hester* I'm sorry I simply can't get Christina out of my mind.

*Mrs Phelps* What do you mean?

*Hester* I mean that I think she's the most perfect person I've ever seen.

*Mrs Phelps* Do you really? Which way did they go, Robin?

*Robert* [*at the window*]. Down the front.

*Mrs Phelps* Can you see them?

*Robert* They're just standing in the road. Now they're moving down under the trees.

*Mrs Phelps* But they can't even see the long hill from the trees.

*Robert* They're not looking at the long hill.

*Mrs Phelps* What are they looking at?

*Robert* Each other. It's quite a romantic picture. Now she's put her head on his shoulder. His arm is around her waist. . .

*Mrs Phelps* Faugh! Call them in!

[*Her irritation produces a discord in the nocturne. ROBERT moves to go*]

*Hester* Oh, don't, Rob! It's the first chance they've had to be alone together.

*Mrs Phelps* They can be alone without David's catching pneumonia, can't they? She drags him out of doors at night in freezing weather to spoon in the road like a couple of mill hands! I should think she might have some consideration for her husband's health, let alone for my feelings.

*Hester* [*a little hotly*] In the first place, it was David who dragged her out. In the second, they are in love and do want to be alone. In the third, I don't see any reason for worrying over the health of any man who looks as husky as David does. And in

the fourth, if there is any worrying to be done, let me remind you that it's Christina and not David who is going to have a baby

[MRS PHELPS breaks off her playing in the middle of a phrase]

I'm sorry if I've shocked you, but the truth is, you've both shocked me

Robert How have we shocked you?

Hester By not being a great deal more thrilled over Christina's baby When I drank my cocktail to it before dinner, neither of you drank yours When I wanted to talk about it during dinner, you both changed the subject You haven't mentioned that baby since dinner, except once, and that was catty! You've known about that baby for over two hours and you aren't excited about it yet! Not what I call excited.

Mrs Phelps If you'll forgive my saying so, Hester, I'm not sure that an unborn baby is quite the most suitable subject for

Hester I'm blessed if I see anything bad form about a baby!

Robert No more does Mother—after it's born

Hester I can't wait for that I love thinking about them And wondering what they're going to be—I mean, boy or girl Why, we had bets up on my sister's baby for months before he was born

Mrs Phelps I'm not ashamed to be old-fashioned

Hester You ought to be This is going to be a very remarkable baby There aren't many born with such parents And I intend to go right on talking about it with anyone who'll listen to me Christina doesn't mind She's just as interested as I am I've already made her promise to have my sister's obstetrician

Mrs Phelps Really, Hester!

Hester I'd go to the ends of the earth for that man Christina's baby has put me in a very maternal frame of mind

Mrs Phelps Maternal!

Hester What I say is I'm as good as married I might as well make the best of my opportunities to get used to the idea Because I intend to have as many babies as possible

Mrs Phelps [glancing at Robert] Is that why you're marrying Rob, Hester?

Hester What better reason could I have? I'm sorry if I've shocked you, but, as I

said before, you've shocked me, and that's that

[Coolly, MRS PHELPS goes for the coffee tray Her eyes meet ROBERT's, and there is no mistaking the intention of the look they give him Then, without a word, she leaves ROBERT and HESTER alone together]

Robert [starting after her] Mother! . . . Hester didn't mean . . . Oh . . . [He turns back to HESTER] Hester, how could you?

Hester I don't know . . . But I don't care if I did!

Robert It doesn't make things any easier for me

Hester Oh, Rob, dear, I am sorry!

Robert You've got Mother all ruffled and upset Now we'll have to smooth her down and have all kinds of explanations and everything Really, it was too bad of you

Hester I know I lost my temper . . . You understand, don't you?

Robert I understand that you're a guest in Mother's house

Hester Is that all you understand? Oh, Rob!

Robert I'm sorry, Hester But, for the moment, I'm thinking of Mother

Hester I see I'll apologize

Robert That's up to you

Hester I suppose she'll never forgive me It isn't this, though

Robert This?

Hester The scene I made

Robert What do you mean?

Hester I don't know . . . Some mothers like the girls their sons marry

Robert Doesn't that depend on the girls?

Hester Not entirely

Robert You mustn't be unjust to Mother

Hester Rob, I'm a little tired of hearing about your mother

[Suddenly penitent again] Oh, I didn't mean to say that! I didn't mean it a bit! I'm sorry, Rob

Now I'm apologizing to you Don't you hear me?

Robert Yes, I hear you What then?

Hester Oh, what difference does it make? I'm not marrying your mother I'm marrying you And I love you, Rob! I love you!

Robert Yes, my dear

Hester I'll never be bad again

Robert I'm willing to take your word for it

Hester You'd better be Oh, you are angry with me, Rob!

Robert No I'm not  
 Hester You're a queer one  
 Robert Think so? How?  
 Hester As a lover I've never seen another like you  
 Robert Haven't you? [*A thought strikes him*] Tell me something, Hester.  
 Hester What?  
 Robert Have you had many?  
 Hester Many what?  
 Robert Lovers  
 Hester Oh, Robert, what a thing to say to a lady!  
 Robert You know what I mean.  
 Hester I'm not quite sure I want to answer  
 Robert I'm not asking for their names  
 Hester Oh, I shouldn't mind that . . . the truth is . . . I don't know . . .  
 Robert You must  
 Hester I don't really I used to think oh, quite often that one of my beaux was coming to the point but  
 Robert Yes?  
 Hester But none of them ever did  
 Robert That surprises me Why not?  
 Hester I don't think it was entirely lack of allure Rob  
 Robert Of course it wasn't!  
 Hester I think it was because I always laughed  
 Robert You didn't laugh at me  
 Hester You looked foolish enough, now that I think of it  
 Robert Yes I daresay . . . So I was the only one  
 Hester Say the only one I didn't laugh at, please You make me sound so undesirable  
 Robert I didn't mean to Tell me, Hester  
 Hester Anything  
 Robert Have you thought what it will mean to be my wife?  
 Hester A very pleasant life.  
 Robert For you?  
 Hester I certainly hope so.  
 Robert I don't know that I quite share your enthusiasm for children.  
 Hester You will  
 Robert They don't exactly help a career, you know  
 Hester Have you got a career?  
 Robert I fully intend to have one.  
 Hester I'm glad to hear it

Robert I've got just as much talent as Dave has  
 Hester What kind of talent?  
 Robert I haven't decided I can draw pretty well I'm not a bad musician I might decide to compose I might even write I've often thought of it And children, you see  
 Hester I don't know much about careers, but Lincoln had children and adored 'em, and if you can do half as well as he did  
 Robert Then my preferences aren't to be considered?  
 Hester You just leave things to me If we're poor, I'll cook and scrub floors I'll bring up our children I'll take care of you whether we live in New York or Kamchatka This business is up to me, Rob Don't let it worry you  
 Robert [*crushed*] I only wanted to make sure you understood my point of view  
 Hester If I don't, I shall, so let's cut this short  
 [*She goes a little huffily to the window, ROBERT watching her uneasily*]  
 Hello!  
 Robert What is it?  
 Hester There goes your mother down the road  
 Robert [*joining her*]. So it is! What can she be doing?  
 Hester She's fetching her darling David in out of the cold I knew she would  
 Robert Hester, would you mind not speaking that way of Mother?  
 Hester Can't she leave them alone for a minute?  
 Robert She's the worrying kind  
 Hester Oh, rot!  
 Robert Evidently you're bent on making things as difficult as possible for me  
 Hester I'm sorry you feel that  
 [*A long irritable pause*]  
 Robert Hester?  
 Hester Yes?  
 Robert. Have you thought any more about our honeymoon?  
 Hester Didn't we decide to go abroad?  
 Robert Abroad's a pretty general term You were to think where you wanted to be taken  
 Hester I left that to you  
 Robert You said you "didn't care"  
 Hester I don't

Robert Nor where we live after . . . nor how

Hester I don't . . . I don't I want to live with you [*Suddenly warming*] What's the use of this, Rob?

Robert We've never talked seriously about our marriage before

Hester What is there to say about it?

Robert A great deal

Hester I don't agree Marriages are things of feeling They'd better not be talked about

Robert Real marriages can stand discussion!

Hester Rob!

Robert What?

Hester That wasn't nice

Robert Wasn't it?

Hester [*suddenly frightened*] What's the matter, Rob? I'll talk as seriously as you please Do I love you? Yes Am I going to make you a good wife? I hope so, though I am only twenty and may make mistakes Are you going to be happy with me? I hope that, too, but you'll have to answer it for yourself

Robert I can't answer it

Hester Why can't you?

Robert Because I'm not sure of it

Hester Aren't you, Rob?

Robert These things are better faced before than after

Hester What is it you're trying to say?

Robert If only we could be sure!

Hester [*stunned*] So that's it!

Robert Are you so sure you want to marry me?

Hester How can I be—now?

Robert Marriage is such a serious thing You don't realize how serious

Hester Don't I?

Robert No I hope you won't think harshly of me And, mind you, I haven't said I wanted to break things off . . . I only want

Hester Please, Rob!

Robert No You've got to hear me out

Hester I've heard enough, thank you!

Robert I'm only trying to look at this thing . . .

Hester Seriously I know

Robert Because, after all, the happiness of three people is affected by it

Hester Three?

Robert As Mother said, before dinner.

Hester So you talked this over with your mother?

Robert Isn't that natural?

Hester Is your mother the third?

Robert Wouldn't she be?

Hester. Yes, I suppose she would . . . I think you might tell me what else she had to say.

Robert It was all wise and kind You may be as hard as you like on me, but you mustn't be hard on poor splendid lonely Mother.

Hester [*savage—under her breath*]. So she's lonely, too!

Robert. You will twist my meaning!

Hester You said "lonely".

Robert. Perhaps I did But Mother didn't You know, she never talks about herself

Hester I see. What else did she say about us?

Robert Well, you haven't been very interested in planning our future. She notices such things

Hester What else?

Robert She sees through people, you know

Hester Through me?

Robert She thought, as I must say I do, that we didn't love each other quite enough to . . . At least, she thought we ought to think very carefully before we . . .

Hester [*gripping his two arms with all her strength, and stopping him*] If you really want to be free . . . if you really want that, Rob, it's all right It's perfectly all right . . . I'll set you free . . . Don't worry . . . Only you've got to say so You've got to . . . Answer me, Rob. Do you want to be rid of me?

[*There is a pause ROBERT cannot hold her gaze, and his eyes fall She takes the blow*]

I guess that's answer enough [*She draws a little back from him and pulls the engagement ring from her finger*] Here's your ring

Robert Hester! Don't do anything you'll be sorry for afterwards! Don't, please! I can't take it yet!

Hester [*without any sign of emotion, dropping the ring on a table*] I shall have an easier time of it, if you keep away from me I want to save my face if I can

Robert Hester, please!

Hester All right, if you won't go, I will

Robert I'm sorry Of course I'll go

Hester And take your ring with you  
*[He goes to the table, picks up the ring, pockets it, and has just got to the door when HESTER breaks into furious, hysterical sobbing Her sobs rack her and seem, at the same time, to strike ROBERT like the blows of a whip]*

Robert For God's sake, Hester .

*[She drops into a chair and sits, staring straight before her, shaken by her sobs of outraged fury and wretchedness]*

Mother! Christina! Come here! Hester .

*[CHRISTINA appears in the door MRS PHELPS follows her DAVID appears ROBERT returns to HESTER]*

Can't you pull yourself together?

*[She motions him away]*

Christina What's the matter?

Robert It's Hester Can't you stop her?

Mrs Phelps Good heavens, Robin!

What's wrong with the child?

Robert She's . . . upset . . . you see, I was just . . . you know . . .

Mrs Phelps I see! She's taking it badly

*[HESTER's sobs only increase]*

Christina Hester, stop it!

Hester I'm all right I can't . . . I

Christina please

Christina Open a window, Dave

Haven't you any smelling salts in the house, Mrs Phelps?

*[MRS PHELPS goes for them where she left them at teatime]*

Hester Tell Rob to go away! Tell Rob to go away!

Christina Never mind Rob! Get me some aromatic spirits, one of you! Hurry up!

*[ROBERT goes]*

Mrs Phelps Here are my salts

Christina *[peremptorily]* Hester! *[She holds the salts for HESTER to smell]* Now, stop it! Stop it, do you hear me?

Hester I'm trying to stop If you'd only send these awful people out! Take me away, Christina! Take me back to New York! I've got to get away from here I can't face them! I can't! I can't!

Christina Now, stop it!

David *[coming forward from a window]* Here's some snow in my handkerchief Rub it on her wrists and temples

Christina Thanks, Dave

*[She applies it. HESTER, by dint of great*

*effort, gradually overcomes her sobs ROBERT returns with a tumbler partly filled with a milky solution of aromatic spirits]*

Mrs Phelps *[speaking at the same time, in unfeigned wonderment to DAVID]* Really, I do wonder at what happens to girls nowadays! When I was Hester's age, I danced less and saved a little of my strength for self-control

Robert *[speaking through]* Here, Dave. Take this

*[DAVID takes it ROBERT goes again DAVID gives the tumbler to CHRISTINA]*

Christina Good! Can you drink this now, Hester?

Hester Thank you, Christina. I'm all right now It was only .

Christina Never mind what it was Drink this *[HESTER drinks it]*

There, now That's better Just sit still and relax

David What on earth brought it on?

Mrs Phelps *[shrugging her shoulders]*

Rob and she must have had a falling out

David No ordinary one . . . Rob! He's gone . That's funny

Mrs Phelps He'd naturally be distressed

Hester I'm really all right, now, Christina and frightfully ashamed

Mrs Phelps You'd better see how Rob is, Dave His nerves are none too stout Such scenes aren't good for him

Hester *[in a high, strained voice]* No, isn't that so, Mrs Phelps?

Mrs Phelps Did you speak to me, Hester?

Hester Take the smelling salts to Rob with my love . Oh God, Christina!

Christina Now, never mind, Hester You'll go to pieces again

Hester But I've got to mind! And I'm all right! It won't hurt me I wish you'd go, David

Christina. Yes, Dave, do I'll come up in a jiffy

Mrs Phelps When Hester's quieted down *[To DAVID]* We'd better both go and see how Rob is *[She starts to go]*

Hester Mrs Phelps There's something I want to ask you before we part

Mrs Phelps To-morrow, my dear girl

Hester There isn't going to be any to-morrow

Mrs Phelps What?

Hester Rob has just broken our engagement

Mrs Phelps Not really!

Christina [staggered] Hester, what do you mean?

Hester. I mean what I say Rob's just broken our engagement

[CHRISTINA motions to DAVE to go. He obeys]

Mrs Phelps I'm immensely distressed, of course

Hester [shaking her head doggedly] He talked it all over with you before dinner He told me that much, so it won't do you the least bit of good to pretend to be surprised

Mrs Phelps Aren't you forgetting yourself, Hester?

Hester You made him do it Why did you make him do it, Mrs Phelps?

[CHRISTINA, amazed, draws back to observe the pair of them]

Mrs Phelps [with perfect dignity] I don't intend to stand here, Hester, and allow any hysterical girl to be rude to me

Hester [driving on querulously] I'm not being rude! All I want to know is why you talked Rob into jilting me Will you answer me, please?

Mrs Phelps Such things may be painful, my dear girl, but they're far less painful before than after

Hester He quoted that much

Christina What's the good of this, Hester?

Hester I'm only trying to make her tell me why she did it

Mrs Phelps But, Hester! Really! This is absurd!

Hester You've got to! You've got to explain!

Mrs Phelps I had nothing to do with Robin's change of heart

Hester You must have had, Mrs Phelps, and I'm demanding an explanation of why you talked Rob into

Mrs Phelps Isn't it enough that he found out in time that you weren't the wife for him?

Hester That isn't the truth!

Christina Hester, darling!

Hester Can you tell me what he meant when he said that the happiness of three people was at stake?

Mrs Phelps He must have been think-

ing of your happiness as well as his own and mine

Hester What about your loneliness?

Mrs Phelps This is contemptible of you!

Christina Really, Hester, this can't do any good!

Hester I'm going to make her admit that she made Rob

Mrs Phelps [exploding] Very well, then, since you insist! I did advise my son to break with you Do you want to know why?

Hester Yes!

Mrs Phelps Because of your indifference.

Hester Oh!

Mrs Phelps Because he came to me to say that you neither love him nor make any pretense of loving him . .

Hester Rob said that?

Mrs Phelps He even said that you must have misconstrued his friendship and that he never wanted to marry you .

Hester No!

Mrs Phelps And I told him to risk anything anything, rather than such an appalling marriage

Hester I don't believe a word of it!

Mrs Phelps You may believe it or not!

Christina Mrs Phelps, you had really better let me handle this

Mrs Phelps Willingly

Hester Do you believe I took advantage of Rob, Christina?

Christina Of course not!

Mrs Phelps So you take her side, Christina!

Christina I don't believe that, Mrs Phelps

Mrs Phelps [realizing that she has gone too far] No? Well, perhaps

Christina Whatever Robert may think, I can't believe that he said

Mrs Phelps [frightened] Perhaps he didn't say quite that, in so many words but he certainly meant .

Hester I'm going I'm going now Right this minute

Mrs Phelps There's a train at nine in the morning It gets you to New York at twelve I shall have the car for you at eight-thirty

Hester May I have the car now, please, Mrs Phelps?

Mrs Phelps There's no train to-night

Hester It doesn't matter I won't stay



here Not another minute I'll go to the hotel in town

Mrs Phelps You'll do nothing of the sort!

Hester You see if I don't!

Mrs Phelps You've got to think of appearances!

Hester Appearances are your concern Yours and Rob's I'm going to the hotel I don't care what people say! I don't care about anything I won't stay here!

Mrs Phelps Can't you talk to her, Christina? Surely you see . . . for all our sakes!

Hester If you won't let me have the car, I'll call a taxi . . . [She plunges towards the telephone]

Mrs Phelps I forbid you!

Hester [seizing the instrument] I want a taxi . . . a taxi . . . What is the number? Well, give it to me . . . Locust 4000? Give me Locust 4000!

[MRS PHELPS hesitates an instant, then, with terrible coolness, steps forward and jerks the telephone cord from the wall Except for a startled exclamation, very low, from CHRISTINA, there is not a sound HESTER hangs up the receiver and sets down the dead instrument]

Mrs Phelps [after an interminable silence] You are the only person in the world who has ever forced me to do an undignified thing I shall not forget it [She goes nobly]

Hester [weakly, turning to CHRISTINA] Christina, it isn't true what she said He did . . . He did want to marry me! Really, he did! He did!

Christina Of course he did, darling!

Hester I won't stay! I won't stay under that woman's roof!

Christina Hester, darling!

Hester I'll walk to town!

Christina Don't, Hester!

Hester That wasn't true, what she said!

Christina Of course not!

Hester I still love him . . . Let me go, Christina, I'll walk

Christina You can't, at this time of night! It wouldn't be safe!

Hester I don't care! I won't stay!

Christina There! There! You'll come to bed now, won't you!

Hester No! No! I can't! I'd rather die! I'll walk to town

Christina You'll force me to come with you, Hester I can't let you go alone

Hester I won't stay another minute!

Christina Do you want to make me walk with you? Think, Hester! Think what I told you before dinner! Do you want to make me walk all that way in the cold?

Hester [awed by this] Oh, your baby! I didn't mean to forget your baby! Oh, Christina, you mustn't stay, either! This is a dreadful house! You've got to get your baby away from this house, Christina! Awful things happen here!

Christina Hester, darling! Won't you please be sensible and come up to bed?

Hester [speaking at the same time, as her nerves begin to go again] Awful things, Christina. . . You'll see if you don't come away! You'll see! She'll do the same thing to you that she's done to me You'll see! You'll see!

## SCENE TWO

The curtain rises again, as soon as possible, upon DAVID's little bedroom, untouched since the day when DAVID went away to Harvard and scorned to take his prep school trophies and souvenirs with him The furniture is rather more than simple The bed is single There is a dresser There are only a couple of chairs The curtains at the single window have been freshly laundered and put back in their old state by MRS PHELPS in a spirit of maternal archeology Insignificant loving cups, won at tennis, stand about the dresser No pennants, no banners There might be some tennis rackets, golf sticks, crossed skis, a pair of snow-shoes, class photographs and framed diplomas There must also be a fairly important reproduction of Velasquez' Don Balthazar Carlos on horseback, selected by MRS PHELPS as DAVID's favorite Old Master A final touch is DAVID's baby pillow

DAVID stands in his pajamas and socks, about to enter upon the last stages of his preparations to retire for the night The room has been strewn with clothing during the preliminary stages Now he is in the ambulatory state of mind A series of crosses and circumnavigations produces several empty packs of cigarettes from several pockets, corners of the suitcase, etc This frustration brings on baffled scratchings of



the head and legs. Then he gives up the cigarette problem, turns again to the suitcase, spills several dirty shirts and finally, apparently from the very bottom, extracts a dressing-gown, a pair of slippers, a tooth-brush, and some tooth-paste. He sheds the socks, dons the slippers and dressing-gown, and sallies forth with brush and paste to do up his teeth in the bathroom. He goes by the door which gives on the hall at the head of the stairs.

After he has been gone a few seconds, a tiny scratching sound is heard on the other side of the other door to the room and that is opened from without. We see the scratcher at work, conveying the impression that a wee mouse wants to come in. The wee mouse is none other than MRS PHELPS, all smiles in her best negligée, the most effective garment she wears in the course of the entire play, carrying a large eiderdown comfort.

The smile fades a little when she discovers that the room is empty. Then its untidiness catches her eye and she shakes her head reprovingly, as who should say "What creatures these big boys are!" She goes to work at once, true mother that she is, to pick things up. She loves her work and puts her whole heart into it. The trousers are neatly hung over the back of the chair, the coat and waistcoat hung over them. The shirts, socks, and underwear are folded and laid chastely on the seat. One or two of the garments receive devout maternal kisses and hugs. Then she goes to the bed, lifts off the suitcase, pushes it underneath, adjusts the eiderdown, smooths the pillow and kisses that. Last, all smiles again, she sits, carefully disposing her laces and ribbons, to await DAVID's return. She yearns for it, and she has not long to wait.

DAVID returns. His mother's beaming smile, as he opens the door, arouses his usual distaste for filial sentimentality. It is intensified, now—and very ill-concealed—by the hour, his costume, and recent events. He hesitates in the doorway.

Mrs Phelps: Why do you look so startled? It's only Mother!

David [laconically]: Hello, Mother!

Mrs Phelps: I came in to ask if you needed anything and

David: Not a thing, thanks.

Mrs. Phelps: And to warn you against

opening the window in this weather. Oh, and I brought you that extra cover I've been picking up after you, too!

David [looking gloomily about]: You needn't have troubled.

Mrs Phelps: It took me back to the old days when I used to tuck you up in that same little bed.

David [as a strong hint]: Yeah. I'm just turning in, Mother.

Mrs Phelps [regardless]: And then sit in this very chair and talk over all my problems with you. I feel that I must talk to my big boy tonight. I must get acquainted with my Dave again.

David [as an even stronger hint]: We're not exactly strangers, are we? And besides, it's getting late.

Mrs Phelps [even more persistent]: It was always in these late hours that we had our talks in the old days when we were still comrades. Oh, are those days gone forever? Don't you remember how we used to play that we had an imaginary kingdom where we were king and queen?

David [moribund]: Did we? I wish Chris 'ud come up.

Mrs Phelps [with a frown and speaking quickly]: Have you noticed, Dave, boy, that your room is just as you left it? I've made a little shrine of it. The same curtains, the same.

David [breaking in]: I suppose Chris is still trying to get Hester quiet?

Mrs Phelps: I suppose so. And every day I dusted in here myself and every night I prayed in here for

David [a little too dryly for good manners]: Thanks.

Mrs Phelps [reproachfully]: Oh, David, you can't get that horrid scene downstairs out of your mind!

David: No.

Mrs Phelps: Try! I need my big boy so! Because I'm facing the gravest problem of my life, Dave. And you've got to help me.

David: What is it?

Mrs Phelps: Is it true that I'm of no more use to my two sons?

David: Whatever put such an idea in your head?

Mrs Phelps: You did.

David [shocked]: I?

Mrs Phelps [nodding]: You weren't really glad to see me this afternoon.

*David* [in all sincerity] I was I  
was delighted!

*Mrs Phelps* [bravely stopping him] Not  
glad as I was to see you I noticed, Dave!

And that made me wonder whether  
this scientific age—because it is a scientific  
age, Dave—isn't making more than one boy  
forget that the bond between mother and  
son is the strongest bond on earth.

*David* [not quite sure of the superlat-  
ive] Well, it's certainly strong

*Mrs Phelps* Do you realize how sinful  
any boy would be to want to loosen it?

*David* Sure I realize that!

*Mrs Phelps* I see so many poor mothers,  
no less deserving of love and loyalty than  
I, neglected and discarded by their chil-  
dren, set aside for other interests

*David* What interests?

*Mrs Phelps* All kinds of things . .  
Wives

*David* [shying] Nonsense, Mother!

*Mrs Phelps* The Chinese never set any  
relationship above their filial piety They'd  
be the greatest people on earth if only  
they'd stop smoking opium

*David* You haven't any kick, have you?  
I mean Rob and I haven't let you down?

*Mrs Phelps* Not yet, Dave But, you  
know the old saying?

*David* What old saying?

*Mrs Phelps* That a boy's mother is his  
best friend

*David* Oh! Bet I do!

*Mrs Phelps* Do you think of your  
mother as your best friend?

*David* None better, certainly

*Mrs Phelps* None better! Hm! You  
can say, though, that you haven't entirely  
outgrown me?

*David* Of course I haven't! Why, I'd  
hate to have you think that just because  
I'm a grown man, I

*Mrs Phelps* No son is ever a grown man  
to his mother!

[There is a knock at the door]

Who can that be at this hour?

*David* I hope it's Chris [He starts for  
the door]

*Mrs Phelps* [freezing suddenly as she  
rises] Dave!

*David* [turning] What?

*Mrs Phelps* Wait . . I mustn't in-  
trude

Good-night

*David* [calling out] Just a minute! [To

his mother, politely] You wouldn't be in-  
truding!

*Mrs Phelps* Not on you, I know  
But

*David* Not on Chris either!

*Mrs Phelps* I know best Kiss me good-  
night

*David* Good-night, Mother [He kisses  
her cheek]

*Mrs Phelps* [giving him a quick hug]  
God bless my big boy!

[She goes as she came DAVID's look,  
as he watches her door close behind  
her, is baffled He goes quickly to the  
other door ROBERT is standing out-  
side]

*David* For Pete's sake, Rob! I thought it  
was Chris! Why didn't you walk in?

*Robert* I thought Mother was in here

*David* She was She just went to bed

*Robert* [entering] She must have thought  
it was Chris, too!

*David* How do you mean?

*Robert* I shouldn't rush things if I were  
you

*David* Maybe you're right Women are  
too deep for me

*Robert* I came in for a smoke I had to  
talk to you I've been sitting in my room  
wondering what you think of all this

*David* [finding and lighting a cigarette]  
I don't think much, and that's the truth!

*Robert* Good God, Dave, can't you be a  
little easier on me? Didn't you ever feel any  
doubts when you were engaged? Were you  
always so sure of Christina that you

*David* The first time I asked Chris to  
marry me, she made it perfectly clear that,  
as far as she was concerned, I was to con-  
sider myself dripping wet After that I was  
too damn scared I wouldn't get her to think  
whether she loved me or not

*Robert* [darkly] And I never had one  
comfortable moment from the time Hester  
accepted me

*David* Oh, being in love's like everything  
else You've got to put some guts in it

*Robert* [with bitter anger] You think I  
haven't got any guts You want to make me  
look like a callous cad! All right, I'll be a  
cad I don't care what people think about  
me! But I'll tell you one thing! I'm damned  
if I'm going to let you turn Mother against  
me!

*David* Do what?

*Robert* You heard me!

*David* My God, haven't you outgrown that old stuff yet?

*Robert* I know from experience what to expect when you and Mother get together I used to listen at that door, night after night, night after night, while you and Mother sat in here and talked me over Then I'd watch for the change in her next morning at breakfast when I hadn't slept a wink all night The way you used to own the earth at those breakfasts! Well, if you try any of that old stuff to-night, I'll lose the only prop I've got left

*David* Isn't it about time you let go of Mother's apron-strings?

*Robert* You would say that! You don't realize that I'm desperate

*David* Desperate, hell! You're crazy! Mother's gone to bed and

*[The wee mouse scratches at the door again]*

What's that?

*Mrs Phelps [entering]* It's only Mother Are you two beaux quarreling? Jealous, jealous Robin! What's the matter?

*David* Nothing

*Mrs Phelps* A fine man is a frank man, David! Do you think I didn't hear every word you said? Surely you must know that Hester wasn't worthy of your brother?

*David* Wasn't she? Well, let's not talk any more about it

*Mrs Phelps* Oh, but we must For all our sakes, we must clear the air I have always taken the stand that my boys could do absolutely no wrong, and that is the proper stand for a mother to take Didn't I always side with you in your school scrapes? Even against the masters? Even when you were clearly in the wrong? Of course, I did! And I shall not permit one word of criticism against your brother now Loyalty, Dave! Loyalty! Come, now! Tell Mother all about it!

*David* But if you overheard every word we said

*Mrs Phelps* "Overheard," David? Am I given to eavesdropping?

*David* I didn't say so

*Mrs Phelps* I simply want to make sure I didn't miss anything while I was in my bath

*David* I don't misunderstand him I'm sorry for Hester, that's all

*Robert* We're all sorry for Hester.

*David* I don't think it's your place to be too sorry

*Robert* Let's drop it, Mother

*Mrs Phelps* No I've got to know what's on Dave's mind My whole life may hang on it What is it, Dave? [*Carefully sounding*] If Robin's not to blame, perhaps I am?

*Robert [horrified]*. Mother!

*David* What's the use of getting so worked up over nothing?

*Mrs Phelps* Nothing! Can you say "nothing" after what *we* were talking about a few minutes ago?

*David [cornered]* I only think . .

*Mrs Phelps* What?

*David* Well, that you've both handed Hester a somewhat dirty deal And Chris must think so, too!

*Mrs Phelps [wary]* Indeed! And how, please?

*David* Well, it comes of what Chris calls "mythologizing"

*Mrs Phelps [frightened]*. Does Christina discuss our family affairs already?

*David* No It's one of her old ideas about people in general You mythologize Rob into a little tin god Rob thinks he is a little tin god Along comes Hester and falls in love with the real Rob She never heard of your little tin god Rob She doesn't deliver the incense and tom-toms That makes you and Rob sore, and the whole works goes to hell That's mythologizing Believe me, it can make plenty of trouble

*Mrs Phelps [relieved that the criticism is so general]* If that's all I'm to blame for, I don't know that I can object Expecting the best of everyone is, at least, a worthy fault Still, if I may venture an older woman's opinion on one of Christina's ideas?

*David* I wish to God I hadn't started this

*Mrs Phelps* So do I But perhaps you'll tell me what Christina would say to the true reason for Robin's break with Hester?

*David* What is the true reason?

*Mrs Phelps* Do you want to tell him, Robin?

*Robert [inspired]* I broke with Hester because of an ideal, the ideal of woman-kind Mother gave us both by being the great woman that she is I knew I couldn't be happy with any woman who fell short of her

*Mrs Phelps* What becomes of your 'dirty' deal now, David?

*David* But I'm not going against that ideal, Mother. That's another thing.

*Robert* You couldn't have troubled much about it when you married!

*Mrs Phelps* You shouldn't have said that, Robin. I haven't had Christmas advantages I wasn't given a German education.

*David* Now, don't take this out on Chris, Mother.

*Mrs Phelps* I think I know a little of a mother's duty toward her daughter-in-law. Good-night, Robin. I must talk with your brother alone, now. And before you quarrel again, stop to think that you are all I have, you two, and try to consider me. It isn't much to ask and it won't be for long. You both know what the doctors think about my heart! Dr. McClintock tells me I may go at any moment. *[After a pause]* Good-night, Robin.

*Robert* *[frightened]* Good-night, Mother.

*Mrs Phelps* You may come into my room later, if you like. I may need you to comfort me after.

*[She waves her hand. He leaves. She has never taken her eyes off David. When the door closes behind Robert, she speaks.]*

David, in this moment, when your brother and I most needed your loyalty, you have hurt me more than I have ever been hurt in my life before, even by your father.

*David* I never meant to hurt you.

*Mrs Phelps* *[working it up]* You have been wicked, David! Wicked! Wicked!

*David* How?

*Mrs Phelps* You have shown me too clearly that what I most dreaded has already come to pass!

*David* What, Mother?

*Mrs Phelps* You have loosened the bond between us. You have discarded me.

*David* *[horrified]* But I haven't done any such thing!

*Mrs Phelps* Don't say any more! Act upon your treachery, if you will, but don't, please, don't say another thing. Remember!

"The brave man does it with a sword,  
The coward with a word!"

*[And she sweeps out, slamming her door after her.]*

*David* *[speaking through her door]* But I didn't mean anything. . . Won't you let me explain? I didn't know what I was talking about!

*[There is no answer. He rattles the door. It is locked. He comes away, swearing softly under his breath. Then, manfully, he takes refuge in silence. He kicks off his slippers and throws his dressing-gown aside. He lights a cigarette and flounces into bed, snatching up a book or magazine en route. Just as he is settled, his mother's door opens again very slowly. Mrs. Phelps presents a tear-stained face to him and comes in.]*

*Mrs Phelps* Smiling in bed, Dave boy?

*David* *[starting up]* Oh?

*Mrs Phelps* It's only Mother. . . No, don't get up. Let me sit here as I used to in the old days.

*David* *[sitting up]* Mother, I didn't mean.

*Mrs Phelps* Never mind. I was wrong to be hurt.

*David* But you had me all wrong. I mean. You and I. We're just the same as we always were. Believe me, we are. Why, if anything came to spoil things between us.

*Mrs Phelps* *[having conquered the first objection]* That's what I wanted you to say! Now talk to me about Christmas.

*David* *[taken aback without knowing why]* Huh?

*Mrs Phelps* Give me your hand in mine and tell me all about her.

*David* *[obeying rather reluctantly]* What is there to tell?

*Mrs Phelps* Well, for one thing, tell me you think she's going to like me!

*David* *[warmly]* She does already!

*Mrs Phelps* Doesn't think I'm an old-fashioned frump?

*David* I should say not! How could she?

*Mrs Phelps* She's such a modern young lady. So lovely, but so very up-to-date. You must tell me everything I can do to win her to me. And I'll do it. Though I'm afraid of her, Dave.

*David* *[amused]* Afraid of Chris? Why?

*Mrs Phelps* She's so much cleverer than I am. She makes me realize that I'm just a timid old lady of the old school.

*David* *[with nice indignation]* You old!

*Mrs Phelps* [*archly so brave about it*] Yes, I am!

*David* Well, you and Chris are going to be the best friends ever

*Mrs Phelps* You are happy, aren't you?

*David* You bet I am!

*Mrs Phelps* Really happy?

*David* Couldn't be happier!

*Mrs Phelps* I'm so glad! And I thank God that when your hour struck it didn't strike falsely as it did for Robin. Because any one can see the difference between Christina and Hester. Of course, that's a little the difference between you and Rob. You know what I've always said. You are *my* son. Robert takes after his father. But you mustn't be impatient with Christina if she seems, at first, a little slow, a little resentful of our family. We've always been so close, we three. She's bound to feel a little out of it, at first. A little jealous. . .

*David* Not Chris!

*Mrs Phelps* Oh, come now, Dave! I'm sure she's perfect, but you mustn't try to tell me she isn't human. Young wives are sure to be a little bit possessive and exacting and selfish at first.

*David* We needn't worry about that.

*Mrs Phelps* No. At first I thought Christina was going to be hard and cold. I didn't expect her to have our sense of humor, and I don't believe she has much of that. But we've more than we need already. If only she will learn to care for me as I care for her, we can be so happy, all four of us together, can't we?

*David* You bet we can!

*Mrs Phelps* [*dreamily*] Building our houses in Phelps Manor. Deciding to put an Italian Villa here and a little bungalow there. [*As David grows restive*] But the important thing for you, Dave boy, is a sense of proportion about your marriage. I'm going to lecture you, now, for your own good. If, at first, Christina does seem a little exacting or unreasonable, particularly about us, remember that she has to adjust herself to a whole new world here, a very different world from her friends in Omaha. And you must never be impatient with her. Because, if you are, I shall take her side against you.

*David* You are a great woman, Mother!

*Mrs Phelps* You're the great one! How many boys of your age let their wives un-

dermine all their old associations and loosen all their old ties!

*David* Chris wouldn't try that!

*Mrs Phelps* She might not *want* to. But jealous girls think things that aren't so and say things that aren't true. Morbid things.

*David* Morbid things? Chris?

*Mrs Phelps* Only you won't pay too much attention or take her too seriously. I know that, because you would no more let anyone strike at me than I would let anyone strike at you.

*David* But Chris wouldn't.

*Mrs Phelps* As I said to Christina this afternoon. "Christina," I said, "I cannot allow you to sacrifice David!"

*David* Chris sacrifice me! How?

*Mrs Phelps* Why, by taking you away from your magnificent opportunity here.

*David* Oh!

*Mrs Phelps* Be master in your own house. Meet her selfishness with firmness, her jealousy with fairness and her . . . her exaggerations with a grain of salt. . .

*David* What exaggerations?

*Mrs Phelps* Well, you know . . . a girl . . . a young wife, like Christina . . . might possibly make the mistake of

well, of taking sides . . . in what happened downstairs, for instance . . . and without fully understanding . . . You can see how fatal that would be . . . But, if you face the facts always, Dave, boy, and nothing but the facts, your marriage will be a happy one. And, when you want advice, come to your mother always.

*David* Thanks.

*Mrs Phelps* Now, isn't your mother your best friend?

*David* You bet you are, Mummy!

*Mrs Phelps* How long it is since you've called me that! Bless you, my dear, dear boy!

[*She leans over to seal her triumph with a kiss. CHRISTINA'S entrance follows so closely upon her knock that the picture is still undisturbed for her to see. She has changed her dress for a very simple negligée. Her mood is dangerous.*]

*Christina* Oh, I beg your pardon!

*Mrs Phelps* [*so sweetly, after the very briefest pause*] Come in, Christina. I was only saying good-night to Dave. Nothing private! You're one of the family now. You

must feel free to come and go as you like in the house

Christina Thank you

Mrs Phelps We can accustom ourselves to it, can't we Dave?

David Yeah . . .

Christina Dave and I have got so used to sharing the same room, I came in here quite naturally, and . . .

Mrs Phelps Here's your dressing-gown. Dave boy We won't look while you slip it on

[Confusedly Dave gets out of bed and robes himself CHRISTINA'S eyes meet his mother's CHRISTINA'S eyes have the least flash of scorn in them, MRS. PHELPS', the least quaver of fear In that glance, the two women agree on undying enmity]

David You can . . . you can look now

Christina Are you quite sure I may, Mrs. Phelps?

Mrs Phelps Whatever else you may have taken from me, Christina, you cannot take from me the joy of seeing my son here, once more, in his old room, beside me.

Christina [marling up the first score] I haven't meant to take anything from you, Mrs. Phelps

Mrs Phelps [so sweetly again] You know I was only joking [She is ronted, though] Good-night [The two women kiss]

Don't keep Dave up too late He's very tired [She pats Dave, as she passes him on her way to the door] You must be tired, too, Christina How is Hester, now?

Christina Quite all right, thank you

Mrs Phelps Thank you!

[She blows a kiss to DAVID from the door and goes CHRISTINA stands motionless DAVID reaches for a cigarette]

David You look pretty stern, Chris

Christina Do I?

David You've been a brick.

Christina Thanks

David Hester is all right, isn't she?

Christina Yes, poor youngster! I shouldn't be surprised if she were really in luck, Dave

David You may be right But it isn't exactly up to me to say so, is it?

[He lights his cigarette. Her eyes burn him up]

Christina Dave . . .

David Yes?

Christina Whom do you love?

David You Wh?

Christina I wondered, that's all I want to be kissed

David That's easy [He takes her in his arms]

Christina Such a tired girl, Dave . . . I want to be held on to and made much of . . . I want to feel all safe and warm. . . . I want you to tell me that you're in love with me and that you enjoy being in love with me Because just loving isn't enough, and it's being in love that really matters . . . Will you tell me all that, please, Dave?

David [hugging her]. Darling!

Christina You haven't kissed me yet

David [complying, a trifle absent-minded] There!

Christina [as she draws back from him] That isn't what I call making love in a big way

David [repeating the kiss with more energy] Is that better?

Christina There's still something lacking . . . What's the matter? There's nobody watching us

David That's a funny thing to say.

Christina You take me right back to my first beau in Germany He never got very far, either All the English he knew was "water closet"

David Christ! Shame on you!

Christina Shame on you, making me take to low jokes to amuse you . . . I love you

David Darling, darling, Christ!

Christina I love you! I love you! [For a moment she clings to him wildly] I hate being so far from you to-night, Dave. Way off there at the other end of the hall!

David I'm none too pleased myself It's just one of Mother's fool ideas [He lowers his voice whenever he mentions his mother]

Christina She naturally wanted you near her!

David That's it [His eyes fall beneath her steady gaze] We mustn't talk so loud We'll keep Mother awake She can hear every sound we make

Christina Let her hear! It'll do her good!

David That's no way to talk, Christ!

Christina Excuse me I didn't mean to snap I've been fearfully shaken up to-night

David I know you have.

*Christina* And I'm awfully tired

*David* Poor girl!

*Christina* Poor Hester! I don't feel like going to bed yet I want to talk Do you mind?

*David* Go to it

*Christina* I've never come up against anything like this before, I've heard of it, but I've never met it I don't know what to do about it And it scares me

*David* What does?

*Christina* I don't know how to tell you [*With sudden force*] But I've got to tell you, Dave I've got to tell you There are no two ways about that

*David* What are you driving at?

*Christina* Well [*But she changes her mind*] May I ask you a question? Rather an intimate one?

*David* If you must!

*Christina* Being your wife, I thought I might

*David* Shoot!

*Christina* Do you look on me as apart from all other women? I mean, do you think of all the women in the world and then think of me quite, quite differently? Do you, Dave?

*David* I'll bite Do I?

*Christina* Please answer me. It's awfully important to me just now

*David*. Of course I do Why is it so important just now?

*Christina* Because that's how I feel about you and all the other men in the world Because that's what being in love must mean and being properly and happily married Two people, a man and a woman, together by themselves, miles and miles from everybody, from *everybody* else, glancing around, now and then, at all the rest of mankind, at *all* the rest, Dave, and saying "Are you still there? And getting along all right? Sure there's nothing we can do to help?"

*David* Only we do help, don't we?

*Christina* Only really if we feel that way about one another Only *by* feeling that way

*David* That's pretty deep! You do go off on the damndest tacks!

*Christina* Don't you see how that feeling between a man and a woman is what keeps life going?

*David* Is it?

*Christina* What else could be strong enough?

*David* Perhaps you're right [*Then, unaccountably, he shies*] But what's the idea in getting so worked up about it?

*Christina* Because it matters so much, Dave . . . just now . . . that you and I feel that way about each other and that we go on feeling that way and exclude everybody, *everybody* else Tell me you think so, too?

*David* Sure, I think so [*Then, again, he shies from her inner meaning*] You're getting the worst habit of working yourself up over nothing!

*Christina* Do you realize, Dave, that the blackest sinner on earth is the man or woman . . . who breaks in on that feeling? Or tampers with it in any way? Or perverts it?

*David* If you say so, I'll say he is

*Christina* Hel!

*David* Huh?

*Christina* Never mind . . . Your brother didn't feel that way about poor Hester, did he?

*David* Rob always was a funny egg

*Christina* Your mother calls him Robin! "Tweet! Tweet! What does the Birdie say?"

*David* From all I can gather, Hester didn't feel much of *any* way about him

*Christina* I know better than that I've had that child on my hands for the past hour I've learned an awful lot, Dave About her, and *from* her

*David* Look here, Chris Don't you get mixed up in this business, will you?

*Christina* I wonder if I'm not mixed up in it already.

*David* Well, don't "take sides"

*Christina* I wonder if I can help taking sides

*David* It's none of our business

*Christina* I wish I were sure of that [*Baffled, she again shifts her approach*] Poor little Hester goes tomorrow morning How long are we staying?

*David* Oh, I dunno

*Christina* A week?

*David* We can't do less, can we?

*Christina* Can't we?

*David* Don't you want to?

[*There is another pause before CHRISTINA shakes her head DAVID frowns*] You see what comes of taking things so



hard? I'm just as distressed over what's happened as you are Maybe more But I certainly don't want to run away It wouldn't be right Mother'd never understand I'd feel like a bum going off and leaving her in the lurch after this Think what Rob's put her through today and what she'll have to go through with Hester's family and all her friends and everybody else before she's done!

*Christina* She seems to be bearing up

*David* You can't be sure with Mother

*Christina* Can't you?

*David* She's so damned game

*Christina* Is she?

*David* Can't you see that? And, anyway, I've got to look around

*Christina* What at? The houses in Phelps Manor?

*David* I know how you feel, Chris, about Mother's helping hand But I can't be throwing away opportunities, now, can I? With the baby coming?

*Christina* [gravely] No, Dave Of course, you can't Neither can I

*David* How do you mean?

*Christina* Forgotten all about my opportunities, haven't you?

*David* What opportunities?

*Christina* My appointment

*David* Didn't Mother say she could scare up something for you here?

*Christina* She thought she might "scare up" a place where I could "putter around" and keep myself "happy and contented" when the "real doctors" weren't working

*David* She didn't mean anything unkind, Chris Just give Mother a chance and

What are you crying for?

*Christina* [hotly untruthful] I'm not crying

*David* You are!

*Christina* I can't help it

*David* But what's the matter?

*Christina* It doesn't look as if I'm to have much of a show for my eight years of hard work, does it?

*David* Mother and I'll dope out something I couldn't leave her now You know that And anyway, I've got to stay till I get my shirts washed I've only got two left

*Christina* Then we stay, of course

*David* And I must say, Chris, that I don't think you're quite playing ball to judge my home and my family entirely on

what you've seen tonight. Besides, the whole purpose of this visit was to bring you and Mother together and to show Mother that a lady scientist mayn't be as bad as she sounds Because you and Mother have just got to hit it off, you know

*Christina* Have we?

*David* You're apt to be impatient, Chris, and I'm afraid you're intolerant

*Christina* Those are bad faults in a scientist

*David* They're bad faults in anybody

Now, you just give me time, and you'll see how things straighten out

*Christina* Aren't you satisfied with the way our meeting has come off?

*David* There's no use pretending it was ideal I believe in facing the facts always But don't you worry Mother gets on my nerves sometimes You just have to remember what a hard life she's had

*Christina* How has it been hard?

*David* Oh, lots of ways My father wasn't much, you know

*Christina* I didn't know You've never mentioned him

*David* He died when I was five

*Christina* What was the matter with him? Women or drink?

*David* Nothing like that He just didn't amount to much

*Christina* Made a lot of money, didn't he?

*David* Lots

*Christina* And left your mother rich. What other troubles has she had?

*David* Well, her health

*Christina* It doesn't seem so bad

*David* It is, though Heart And I wish I could tell you half of what she's gone through for Rob and me

*Christina* Go on and tell me I'd like to hear

*David* I've heard her say she was born without a selfish hair in her head

*Christina* No!

*David* And that's about true Why, I've seen her nurse Rob through one thing after another when she'd admit to me that she was twice as sick as he was I've seen her come in here from taking care of him and she'd be half fainting with her bad heart, but there'd be nothing doing when I'd beg her to get him a nurse She said we were her job, and she just wouldn't give in And the way she always took interest in every



thing we did Why, when she used to come up to school, all the boys went just crazy about her

*Christina* I'm sure they did [*But she turns the inquiry into more significant channels*] How did your girl friends get on with her?

*David* Oh, they loved her, too! Mother used to give us dances here

*Christina* Did she invite the girls you were in love with?

*David* I never fell in love! Not really Not till I met you

*Christina* Darling! [*She smiles rather absently*] What was the name of the one your mother thought could wear my dress?

*David* Clara Judd?

*Christina* Weren't you sweet on Clara?

*David* I dunno What made you ask that?

*Christina* Just something in the way your mother spoke of her this evening It came back to me Weren't you?

*David* Mother thought so

*Christina* Used to pester you about Clara, didn't she?

*David* She was afraid I was going to marry Clara

*Christina* I see Anything wrong with her?

*David* With Clara? No Damn nice girl You'll meet her

*Christina* Then why didn't your mother want you to marry her?

*David* Thought I was too young

*Christina* When was it?

*David* Summer after the war

*Christina* You weren't so young, were you?

*David* You know Mother

*Christina* How about your brother? Did he used to fall in love a great deal?

*David* I don't know that I'd call it "in love"

*Christina* Why not?

*David* It's the family skeleton She was a chorus girl, my dear She cost Mother twelve thousand berries

*Christina* That must have been jolly! Was she the only one or were there others?

*David* There were plenty of others Only they didn't have lawyers

*Christina* And then Hester?

*David* Right

*Christina* Well, that's all very interesting

*David* What are you trying to prove?

*Christina* An idea this affair of Hester's put into my head And I must say, it fits in rather extraordinarily.

*David* What does?

*Christina* You're being too young to marry after the war and Robert's taking to wild women . . . And you had to be three thousand miles from home to fall in love with me! Never mind . . . That's enough of that! Now let me tell *you* something Only you must promise not to get mad

*David* I won't get mad.

*Christina* Promise?

*David* Promise.

*Christina* [*after a deep breath*] Shirts or no shirts, we've got to get out of here tomorrow

*David* [*as though she had stuck him with a pin*] Now, Chris! Haven't we been over all that?

*Christina* Yes But not to the bottom of it

*David* What more is there to say?

*Christina* [*with sudden violence*] That a defenseless, trusting, little girl has been cruelly treated! We've got to "take sides" with her, Dave!

*David* What's the matter with Hester's own family? This is their business, not ours!

*Christina* We owe it to ourselves to make it our business

*David* I don't see it

*Christina* Why don't you see it? What have you put over your eyes that keeps you from seeing it? Do you dare answer that?

*David* Dare? What do you mean?

*Christina* "Face the facts," Dave! "Face the facts!"

*David* Rot! You're making a mountain out of a mole-hill!

*Christina*. Cruelty to children isn't a mole-hill!

*David* You're exaggerating! Hester's engagement isn't the first that was ever broken

*Christina* Think how it was broken and by whom!

*David* You just said she was in luck to be rid of Rob I'll grant you that I haven't any more use for Rob than you have

*Christina* Who stands behind Rob?

*David* I don't know what you mean.

*Christina* Don't you?

David No

Christina All right, I'll tell you

David [quickly] You needn't Are you trying to pick a fight with me?

Christina On the contrary I'm asking you to stand by me [Her eyes corner him]

David I won't go away and leave Mother in the lurch

Christina You see? You do know what I mean!

David I don't! I'm just telling you I won't let Mother down

Christina You'd rather stand by your mother than by the right, wouldn't you?

David Oh, the right!

Christina Isn't Hester the right?

David [cornered again] I can't help it if she is I won't let Mother down

Christina You'll let me down

David Oh, Chris! It's late Come on Let's turn in

Christina You'd rather stand by your mother than by me, wouldn't you?

David No, I wouldn't I tell you Hester's none of our business

Christina You'll admit this is?

David What is?

Christina This! Who comes first with you? Your mother or me?

David Now what's the good of putting things that way?

Christina That's what things come to! If your mother and I ever quarreled about anything, if it ever came up to you to choose between sticking by me and sticking by her, which would you stick by?

David I'd . . . I'd try to do the right thing

Christina That isn't an answer That's another evasion

David But why ask such a question?

Christina Because I love you Because I've got to find out if you love me And I'm afraid . . . I'm afraid . . .

David Why?

Christina Because you won't see the facts behind all this I'm trying to tell you what they are, and you won't listen You can't even hear me

David I can hear you And a worse line of hokey I've never listened to in my life

Christina [gravely, but with steadily increasing fervor] Have you ever thought what it would be like to be trapped in a submarine in an accident? I've learned to-

night what that kind of panic would be like I'm in that kind of a panic now, this minute I've been through the most awful experience of my life tonight And I've been through it alone I'm still going through it alone It's pretty awful to have to face such things alone No, don't interrupt me I've got to get this off my chest Ever since we've been married I've been coming across queer rifts in your feeling for me, like arid places in your heart Such vast ones, too! I mean, you'll be my perfect lover one day, and the next, I'll find myself floundering in sand, and alone, and you nowhere to be seen We've never been really married, Dave. Only now and then, for a little while at a time, between your retirements into your arid places . . . I used to wonder what you did there At first, I thought you did your work there But you don't Your work's in my part of your heart, what there is of my part Then I decided the other was just No-Man's Land And I thought little by little, I'll encroach upon it and pour my love upon it, like water on the western desert, and make it flower here and bear fruit there I thought then he'll be all alive, all free and all himself; not partly dead and tied and blind, not partly some one else—or nothing You see, our marriage and your architecture were suffering from the same thing They only worked a little of the time I meant them both to work all the time I meant you to work all the time and to win your way, all your way, Dave, to complete manhood And that's a good deal farther than you've got so far . . . Then we came here, and this happened with Hester and your brother, and you just stepped aside and did nothing about it! You went to bed You did worse than that You retired into your private wastes and sat tight . . . I've shown you what you should do, and you won't see it I've called to you to come out to me, and you won't come So now I've discovered what keeps you Your mother keeps you It isn't No-Man's Land at all It's your mother's land Arid, sterile, and your mother's! You won't let me get in there Worse than that, you won't let life get in there! Or she won't! . . . That's what I'm afraid of, Dave your mother's hold on you And that's what's kept me from getting anywhere with you, all these months I've seen what she can do with Robert And

what she's done to Hester I can't help wondering what she may not do with you and to me and to the baby That's why I'm asking you to take a stand on this business of Hester's, Dave You'll never find the right any clearer than it is here It's a kind of test case for me Don't you see? What you decide about this is what you may, eventually, be expected to decide about . . . about our marriage

*David* [after a pause, with sullen violence] No! I'm damned if I see!

*Christina* [breaking] Then I can't hope for much, can I? . . . I feel awfully like a lost soul, right now . . . Oh, my God, what am I going to do! What am I going to do!

*David* I hope you're going to behave You ought to be ashamed Just as I was bringing Mother around to you and .

*Christina* [violently] You'd better think a little about bringing me around to your mother!

*David* Chris!

*Christina* Why should your mother and I get on?

*David* Because you should, that's why. Because she's an older woman and my mother And you know, just as well as I do

*Christina* I know a great deal better than you that your mother dislikes me fully as much as I dislike her You're wasting your time trying to bring your mother and me together, because we won't be brought You say you believe in facing the facts. Well, let's see you face that one!

*David* I've never heard anything so outrageous When you know what Mother means to me and what . . .

*Christina* [desperate] Your mother! Your mother! Always your mother! She's got you back! Dave, her big boy, who ran off and got married! She's got you back!

*David* I won't stand for any more of this A man's mother is his mother

*Christina* [crescendo] And what's his wife, may I ask? Or doesn't she count?

*David* This is morbid rot! She warned me you'd be jealous of her!

*Christina* Did she?

*David* But I never expected anything like this!

*Christina* What's going to become of me?

*David* I won't stand for any more .

*Christina*. Hester's escaped, but I'm

caught! I can't go back and be the old Christina again She's done for And Christina, your wife, doesn't even exist! That's the fact I've got to face! I'm going to have a baby by a man who belongs to another woman!

*David* Damn it, Chris! Do you want Mother to hear you?

*Christina* Do I not!

[*MRS PHELPS stands in her door, white, but steady*]

*David* [turning, sees her] Oh . . . You did hear!

*Mrs Phelps*. How could I help hearing every word that Christina said?

*David* Oh, this is awful!

*Mrs Phelps* We know, now, where we stand, all three of us

*David* Chris, can't you tell her you didn't mean it?

*Mrs Phelps* [with heroic sarcasm] Christina isn't one to say things she doesn't mean And I have no intention of defending myself.

*David* Mother, please! . Chris, you'd better beat it.

*Mrs Phelps* I ask her to stay She has made me afraid ever to be alone with you again She must have made you afraid to be alone with me

*David* Nonsense, Mother! She hasn't done anything of the sort You'd better go, Chris It's the least you can do after what you've said

*Christina* The very least I belong with Hester now [*She goes quickly*]

*David* [turning wildly to his mother] I'll straighten everything out in the morning I swear I will!

*Mrs Phelps* [in a very different, very noble tone] This is an old story, Dave boy, and I'm on Christina's side just as I said I should be

*David* I can't have you talking like that, Mother!

*Mrs Phelps* I accept my fate You have your own life to live with the woman you have chosen No boy could have given me back the love I gave you Go to Christina! Make your life with her! No bond binds you to me any longer.

*David* That isn't true!

*Mrs Phelps* I'm not complaining I'm only sorry for one thing I'm only sorry to see you throw away your chance here, your great chance!

David But I haven't thrown it away I'll stay here and work for you, if you want me to

Mrs Phelps. Christina won't let you You know that!

David She's my wife, isn't she?

Mrs Phelps Think what that means, Dave! Think what that means!

David And you're my mother I'm thinking what that means, too!

Mrs Phelps Then it isn't good-bye? Then I've still got my big boy, after all?

David You bet you've got him!

Mrs Phelps [in triumph]. Oh, Dave! Dave! Dave!

David Now, Mummy!

[But a sound downstairs distracts him] Hello! What's that?

[She listens, too]

Mrs Phelps Heavens, it isn't a fire, is it?

David Wait . . . I'll see . . . [He opens the door into the hall and stands listening]

Christina [below] I went into her room, and she wasn't there, and then I looked for her and I found the dining-room window open

Robert [below] What do you think has happened?

Christina [below] I don't like to imagine things, but

Robert [below] Hester, where are you?

Christina [below] She's got away! I tell you, she's got away! I shouldn't have left her

David [speaking during the above] What?

Mrs Phelps It's Christina and Robert

David Something's happened to Hester

Mrs Phelps No!

David Chris! What's going on?

Robert [below] Hester! Where are you, Hester?

Christina [appearing in the hall] Hester's got away, Dave Out by the dining-room window You'll have to get dressed and find her She can't get to town tonight in this cold

David All right We'll have a look

Mrs Phelps The little fool! Let her go, Dave!

Christina But, Mrs Phelps, she isn't properly dressed She didn't even take her coat

Robert [still calling below] Hester!

Where are you, Hester? Hester! Oh, my God!

[CHRISTINA has walked to the window to look out She utters an inarticulate scream]

David What is it, Chris?

Mrs Phelps Good heavens!

Christina [strangled with horror] It's the pond! The holes in the pond! Quick, Dave, for heaven's sake!

David What? Oh! [He runs out as CHRISTINA opens the window]

Mrs Phelps Dave! . . . [To CHRISTINA] What is it you say?

Robert [below] Dave! For God's sake! Hold on, Hester! Don't struggle!

[DAVID's shouts join his]

Christina [as she collapses on the bed] The pond! I can't look

Mrs Phelps Oh, I've no patience with people who have hysterics!

Christina Mrs Phelps, the girl's drowning!

Mrs Phelps Oh, no! Not that! [She, too, goes to the window, but recoils in horror from what she sees] They'll save her, won't they? They must they must save her . . . If only . . . [Then a new fear overwhelms her] If only those two boys don't catch pneumonia! [And she leaps to the window to call after her sons as they race, shouting, across the snow]

Robin, you're not dressed! Dave, get your coat! Are you crazy? Do you want to catch pneumonia?

### ACT THREE

The living-room again, and the next morning MRS PHELPS is wearing a simple house dress and is busily fixing a great many flowers which she takes from boxes strewn about the stage After she has been so occupied for a few seconds, ROBERT enters

Robert The doctor's gone

Mrs Phelps [surprised] Without seeing me?

Robert It seems so

Mrs Phelps Doesn't that seem very strange to you, Robin? Of course, I thought it best not to go up to Hester's room with him In view of the perfectly unreasonable attitude she's taken toward me But I should

have supposed, naturally, that he'd have made his report to me

*Robert* He says she may as well go to-day He says traveling won't be as bad for her as staying here

*Mrs Phelps* Did he say that to you?

*Robert* I couldn't face him *They* told him the whole story

*Mrs Phelps* Christina and Hester?

[*ROBERT nods*]

I might have known they would . And he listened to them and never so much as asked for me?

*Robert* What of it!

*Mrs Phelps* He'll never enter this house again!

*Robert* So he said! He also said there's nothing the matter with your heart and never has been anything the matter with it He said it would take a stick of dynamite to kill you

*Mrs Phelps* Damned homeopath!

*Robert* And that isn't the worst

*Mrs Phelps* What more?

*Robert* He said that I'd always been a rotter

*Mrs Phelps* Oh?

*Robert* And that I couldn't have been anything else—with such a mother

[*There is venom in this last MRS  
PHELPS'S lips stiffen under it*]

*Mrs Phelps* I think you might have spared me that, Robin

*Robert* I didn't mean to be nasty

*Mrs Phelps* No Still, there are things one doesn't repeat to sensitive people [*But a dark foreboding will not be downed*]

Somehow, though, I can't help feeling that

[*She does not say what she sees in the future*]

*Robert* Neither can I.

[*She looks at him in quack fear Then she returns to her flowers with a shrug*]

*Mrs Phelps* Oh, well! There can't have been much wrong with the girl if she's able to go this morning

*Robert* Thank God for that [*Then with level-eyed cruelty*] It might have been serious, though, after what you did to the telephone Because we couldn't have reached a soul, you know And without Christina in the house

*Mrs Phelps* How was I to know the little fool wanted to drown herself?

*Robert* [*shuddering*] For heaven's sake, don't put it that way!

*Mrs Phelps* How do you put it?

*Robert* She tried to get away, that's all And she got lost in the dark and

*Mrs Phelps* I tell you, she tried to kill herself I've always suspected there was insanity in her family She had a brother who was an aviator in the war Everybody knows that aviators are lunatics Her own conduct has never been what I should call normal Everything points to insanity That's another reason why you shouldn't have married her Because we've never had any of that in our family Except your father's Bright's Disease I shall certainly tell everyone that Hester is insane

*Robert* Perhaps that *will* make things simpler

*Mrs Phelps* As to the telephone, it's the only thing I've ever done to be ashamed of, and I said as much when I did it She made me angry with her wanton attacks on you

*Robert* I didn't hear any wanton attacks

*Mrs Phelps* Where were you?

*Robert* Out there in the hall

*Mrs Phelps* You couldn't have heard the things she muttered under her breath

*Robert* [*with an incredulous sneer*] No!

[*There is a pause, sullen on his part, troubled on hers*]

We're just like Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, aren't we?

*Mrs Phelps* For heaven's sakes, how?

*Robert* We've got into a mess we can't ever get out of We'll have to get in deeper and deeper until we go mad and

*Mrs Phelps* Don't be ridiculous

*Robert* I'm sorry, Mother, but I can't help regretting

*Mrs Phelps* Regretting what?

*Robert* [*in a low tone*] Hester

*Mrs Phelps* Nonsense, Robin! I tell you

*Robert* What do you know about it? Do you understand me any better than Hester did?

*Mrs Phelps* How can you, Robin? I not understand you? Haven't I always told you that however David may take after his father, you are *my* son?

*Robert* What's that got to do with it?

*Mrs Phelps* Robin!

*Robert* If I wasn't sure that I loved Hester, how on earth can I be sure that I

didn't love her? I don't know this minute whether I loved her or not I only know that I'll regret losing her all my life long [A movement of exasperation from his mother stops him Then he concludes] Maybe Dave's right about me Maybe I am too weak to love any one

Mrs Phelps [frightened—to herself] Dave didn't say that!

Robert He said I hadn't any guts

Mrs Phelps Ugh! That horrible word! No, Robin You must put all such thoughts aside

Robert I suppose I'll have to take your word for it [Then with sudden, cold fury] But I won't next time!

Mrs Phelps Robin! You're not holding me responsible?

Robert Who put the idea in my head? Who persuaded me? Who made me promise?

Mrs Phelps Are you implying that I came between you?

Robert Well, if you didn't, who did?

Mrs Phelps Robin! You ought to be ashamed!

Robert Think so?

Mrs Phelps That you should turn on me! Some day you'll regret this It won't be Hester, but *this* that you'll regret When it's too late [And from force of habit her hand steals to her heart]

Robert I daresay I've got a life full of regrets ahead of me [He walks sullenly to the window]

Mrs Phelps You frighten me, Robin! I don't know you like this

Robert Don't you?

[There is a pause MRS PHELPS stares at him in growing horror. He looks out of the window]

Mrs Phelps No

Robert [looking out, his back to her] That's too bad There's Dave putting up danger signs all around the pond! Isn't that like him! After it's too late

[She turns away from him and dully goes on with her flowers, carrying a bowl of them over to the piano ROBERT watches her coldly Then a sudden frown contracts his brow, and he moves toward her]

Mother!

Mrs Phelps What?

Robert Don't put those flowers there! They're too low!

Mrs Phelps Fix them yourself

Robert [changing them with a jar of something else] Isn't that better?

Mrs Phelps Much What an eye you have!

Robert Perhaps I'll develop it some day

Mrs Phelps Would you like to?

Robert I've got to do something

Mrs Phelps [darkly] I quite agree Every young man should have some profession

[Then, suddenly and involuntarily, the boy reverts and is a child again]

Robert What are we going to do, Mother?

Mrs Phelps [in a low tone] Do?

Robert What are we going to do, you and I? We're in the same boat, you know

Mrs Phelps [in a lower tone] I don't know what you mean

Robert Well, what am I going to do, then? I can't stay here and face people after this!

Mrs Phelps What will there be to face?

Robert [crescendo] You know as well as I do This story'll be all over this damn town And Hester's people aren't going to keep quiet in New York Her brothers go everywhere I go My friends will begin cutting me in the street

Mrs Phelps If we say she's insane?

Robert What difference will that make?

Mrs Phelps The *Paris* sails on Saturday

Robert [after a pause, tremulously] What of it?

Mrs Phelps We might go to Washington to hurry our passports

Robert Could we get passage, though?

Mrs Phelps [slowly] I've already wired for it This morning

Robert I see Then we're to sneak away like two guilty fugitives!

Mrs Phelps [avoiding his eye] Sh! Don't say such things!

[DAVID enters, his cheeks stung crimson by the cold]

David Phew, it's cold The pond'll be frozen again by tomorrow if this keeps up What's the doc say about Hester?

Robert She's leaving us today

David I'm glad she's well enough

Mrs Phelps There never was anything the matter with her

David It's easy to see, Mother that you

don't often bathe in that pond in zero weather

*Mrs Phelps* I hope I have more self-control Robin, will you see, please, that the car is ready for Hester?

*Robert* Yes [*He goes*]

*David* Anybody seen Chris?

*Mrs Phelps* Not I

*David* No I suppose not . . . What's the idea in the floral display?

*Mrs Phelps* I felt I had to have flowers about me

*David* That sounds pretty Green Hattish It has a festive look, too I don't see what there is to celebrate

*Mrs Phelps* [*noble tragedienne that she is*] Last night, at a single blow, beauty was stricken out of my life I can't live without beauty, Dave. You must know that So I went to the florist this morning and bought these. They comfort me . a little

*David* [*with that worried look again*] I've been thinking, Mother, that maybe, all things considered, after last night, it will be as well for me to take Chris away on Wednesday, say

*Mrs Phelps* If you like

*David* We can come back later After things have cooled down

*Mrs Phelps* Later, I hope, and often

*David* Time does make things easier, doesn't it?

*Mrs Phelps* They say so

*David* When scientists get these wild ideas and fly off the handle, they're just as embarrassed afterwards as any one else would be

*Mrs Phelps* Naturally

*David* And then Hester's running away and the telephone being busted and all .

*Mrs Phelps* I quite understand

*David* I knew you would

*Mrs Phelps* [*the boxes and papers all stowed away, she sits down to business*] What I'm wondering now, though, is what I'm to do with Robin? And I'm afraid you've got to help me with him

*David* I'll do anything I can

*Mrs Phelps* If I were well and able to stand the things I used to stand before my heart went back on me—because it has gone back on me—and before my blood pressure got so high I shouldn't trouble you

But as I am, and with Robin on the verge of a complete breakdown . . .

*David* But Rob isn't .

*Mrs Phelps* Oh, yes, he is, Dave! He said things to me before you came in that no son of mine would dream of saying unless he had something the matter with him I've got to get him away

*David* Send him abroad

*Mrs Phelps* I don't think he ought to go alone He can't face things alone He's like his father, in that You're *my* son, you know That's why I always turn to you

*David* Why not go with him?

*Mrs Phelps* Because I'm really not well enough in case anything should happen

And I don't know what to do Oh, Dave, boy, do you think . .

*David* What?

*Mrs Phelps* That Christina could spare you for a little? Just a few weeks? Just long enough to get Rob and me settled in some restful place? Do you think she would?

*David* There's no need of that!

*Mrs Phelps* Of course, I'd love to have Christina, too Only I'm afraid that *would* be asking too much I mean, making her put off her work when she's so set on it

*David* But Rob isn't going to give you any trouble

*Mrs Phelps* Do you think I'd ask such a sacrifice of you and Christina, if I weren't sure that it's absolutely necessary? Oh, I'm not thinking of myself I no longer matter Except that I shouldn't want to die abroad with only Robin there, in his present condition

*David* Don't talk that way, Mother!

*Mrs Phelps* Why not? I'm not asking you to be sorry for me It's Robin I'm thinking of Because we haven't done all that we should for Robin And now that I'm old . and sick . . dying . [*She breaks down*]

*David* You're not, Mother!

*Mrs Phelps* [*weeping hysterically*] I can't cope with him He'll slip back again to drinking and fast women

*David* Get hold of yourself, Mother!

*Mrs Phelps* [*more hysterical*] And when I think of what I might have done for him and realize that it's too late, that I haven't any more time only a few



months or weeks I don't know  
I . [She really becomes quite faint]

David [snatching her hand in terror] Mother, what's the matter? Are you ill?

Mrs Phelps [recovering by inches, as she gasps for breath] No! It's nothing I Just give me a minute Don't call any one I'll be all right . . There! That's better!

David You scared me to death

Mrs Phelps I scare myself sometimes You see I do need somebody's help

David Yes, I see you do

Mrs Phelps And so I thought well, since Dave is going to build my houses in Phelps Manor You're not going to disappoint me there, I hope?

David Oh, no!

Mrs Phelps Well, then you won't want to start in that New York office

David Why not?

Mrs Phelps When you'll be leaving so soon to begin here? They wouldn't want you

David I hadn't thought of that

Mrs Phelps And so I thought Well, he can't begin here until April anyway, and that leaves him with two idle months on his hands when he might be drawing plans and getting ideas abroad Think it over, Dave, boy

David You certainly are a great planner, Mother

Mrs Phelps I make such good plans!

David When would you be sailing?

Mrs Phelps Well, I . I had thought vaguely of sailing on the Paris Saturday

David Good Lord! Give a man time to think! I want to do the right thing, but I couldn't leave Chris . Not with the baby coming, you know

Mrs Phelps But you'll be home in plenty of time for that

David That may all be, but, just the same, I wouldn't feel right to leave her

[ROBERT returns]

Mrs Phelps I've just been telling Dave about our wonderful plans, Robin, and he's so enthusiastic! I shouldn't wonder if he came along with us [A sign to DAVID to play up]

Robert What are the plans?

Mrs Phelps Why, your going abroad to study interior decorating, of course

[ROBERT looks surprised]

David Oh, is Rob going to do that?

Robert Any objections?

David I think it's just the job for you. Painting rosebuds on bath tubs

Robert I can make your houses look like something after you've finished with them

Mrs Phelps [ecstatically]. My two boys in partnership! Oh, that's always been my dream! Oh, how simply things come straight when people are willing to co-operate and make little sacrifices! If there's one thing I pride myself on, it's my willingness to make little sacrifices Here we are, we three, a moment ago all at odds with life and with each other, now united and of a single mind . . .

David This is all very fine But don't you forget that I've got to talk to Christina

[But CHRISTINA has opened the door upon his very words She is dressed as she was when she first came to the house She wears her hat and her fur coat and carries her bag in her hand]

Christina [speaking as she enters] Well, now's your chance, Dave What have you got to talk to me about?

David [staring at her] What's the idea, Chris?

Christina [setting the bag down by the door] I'm going away with Hester Are you coming, too?

David [staggered] Now?

Christina In a few minutes I came down ahead No, don't go, Mrs Phelps And won't you stay, too, Robert? I think it's best that we should thrash this question out together, here and now, for good and all

Mrs Phelps What question, Christina?

Christina The David question, Mrs Phelps Whether David is going on from this point as your son or as my husband.

Robert What?

Christina Isn't that the issue?

[She asks the question less of DAVID than of MRS PHELPS, who turns to her sons in terror]

Mrs Phelps I can't go through this a second time!



*David* [quieting her with a gesture] No one expects you to . . . [To CHRISTINA, pleading almost pathetically] You're not going to begin all that again, Chris?

*Christina* I'm afraid I am

*David* But, just as I was getting everything all straightened out . . .

*Christina* Were you doing that?

*David* If only you'll leave things be, they'll be all right You may believe it or not

*Christina* I can't believe it, and I can't leave things be Oh, I'd walk out without a word, even loving you as I do, if I thought this state of affairs made any one of you happy

*Robert* What state of affairs?

*Christina* The state of affairs you've all been living in and suffering from, for so long

*Mrs Phelps* You might let us judge our own happiness

*Christina* I might, if you had any But you haven't

*Robert* You're quite sure of that?

*Christina* Quite, Robert You're all of you perfectly miserable! Am I wrong?

*Mrs Phelps* Christina! Please!

*Robert.* Thank you for being sorry for us!

*Christina* You give me such good reason, Robert Such awfully good reason! Because you're not really bad people, you know You're just wrong, all wrong, terribly, pitifully, all of you, and you're trapped .

*Mrs Phelps* What we say in anger, we sometimes regret, Christina .

*Christina* Oh, I'm not angry I was, but I've got over it I rather fancy myself, now, as a sort of scientific Nemesis I mean to strip this house and to show it up for what it really is I mean to show you up, Mrs Phelps Then Dave can use his own judgment

*Mrs Phelps* [in blank terror at this attack] Oh! Dave, I

*David* Now, Mother! Chris! Haven't you any consideration for our feelings? Are they nothing to you?

*Christina* I'm trying to save my love, my home, my husband, and my baby's father Are they nothing to you?

*David* But surely I can be both a good son and a good husband!

*Christina* Not if your mother knows it, you can't!

*Mrs Phelps* [with a last desperate snatch at dignity] If you'll excuse me, I'd rather not stay to be insulted again [She is going]

*Christina* You'll probably lose him if you don't stay, Mrs Phelps!

[MRS PHELPS stays CHRISTINA turns to DAVID]

No, Dave, There's no good in any more pretending Your mother won't allow you to divide your affections, and I refuse to go on living with you on any basis she will allow

*Mrs Phelps* I cannot see that this is necessary

*Christina* It's a question a great many young wives leave unsettled, Mrs Phelps I'm not going to make that mistake [Back to DAVE again] You see, Dave, I'm not beating about the bush I'm not persuading you or wasting any time on tact Do you want your chance or don't you? Because, if you don't, I'll have to get over being in love with you as best I can and

*David* I wish you wouldn't talk this way, Chris!

*Christina* Are you coming with me? On the understanding that, for the present, until your affections are definitely settled on your wife and child, you avoid your mother's society entirely. Well? What do you say?

*David* I don't know what to say

*Christina* You never do, Dave darling

*David* I'm too shocked I've never been so shocked in my life

*Christina* [with a glance at her wrist watch] Just take your time, and think before you speak

*David* I don't mean that I don't know what to say about taking my chance, as you call it I can answer that by reminding you of your duty to me I can answer that by calling all this what I called it last night morbid rot! But I am shocked at your talking this way about my mother and to her face, too!

*Christina* Is that your answer?

*David* No, it isn't! But a man's mother is his mother

*Christina* So you said last night I'm not impressed An embryological accident

is no grounds for honor Neither is a painful confinement, for I understand, Mrs Phelps, that you're very proud of the way you bore your children I know all about the legend of yourself as a great woman that you've built up these thirty years for your sons to worship It hasn't taken me long to see that you're not fit to be any one's mother

David Chris!

Robert [*speaking at the same time*] See here, now!

Mrs Phelps Let her go on! Let her go on! She will explain that or retract it!

Christina I'm only too glad to explain It's just what I've been leading up to And I'll begin by saying that if my baby ever feels about me as your sons feel about you, I hope that somebody will take a little enameled pistol and shoot me, because I'll deserve it

Mrs Phelps [*going again*] I've been insulted once too often

Christina I don't mean to insult you I'm being as scientific and impersonal as possible

Robert Good God!

Christina [*regardless*] Speaking of insults, though, what explanation can you offer me for your rudeness to me as a guest in your house?

Mrs Phelps I have not been rude to you

Christina You have been appallingly rude Second question Why do you resent the fact that I am going to have a baby?

Mrs Phelps I don't resent it

Christina Then why are you so churlish about it?

Mrs Phelps Your delicacy about it would have

Christina That's another evasion You're afraid that baby will give me another and stronger hold on David, and you mean to separate David and me if it's humanly possible

Mrs Phelps I do not! I do not!

Christina Did you or did you not bend every effort to separate Hester and Robert?

Mrs Phelps I most certainly did not!

Christina Then how do you account for the deliberate and brutal lies you told Hester about Robert? Because she did lie to Hester about you, Robert She told

Hester that you never wanted to marry her

Robert [*aghast*] Mother, you didn't!

Mrs Phelps Of course, I didn't

Christina [*Joan of Arc raising the siege of Orleans*] I heard her And I heard her call both of you back, last night, when you ran out to save Hester from drowning I heard her call you back from saving a drowning girl for fear of your catching cold I heard her I heard her

David [*shaken*] You shouldn't have called us, Mother!

Christina Can she deny that her one idea is to keep her sons dependent on her? Can she deny that she opposes any move that either one of you makes toward independence? Can she deny that she is outraged by your natural impulses toward other women?

Mrs Phelps [*furious*] I deny all of it!

Christina You may deny it until you're black in the face, every accusation I make is true! You belong to a type that's very common in this country, Mrs Phelps—a type of self-centered, self-pitying, son-devouring tigress, with unmentionable proclivities suppressed on the side

David Chris!

Christina I'm not at all sure it wouldn't be a good idea, just as an example to the rest of the tribe, to hang one of your kind every now and then!

Robert Really!

Christina Oh, there are normal mothers around, mothers who *want* their children to be men and women and take care of themselves, mothers who are people, too, and don't have to be afraid of loneliness after they've outlived their motherhood, mothers who can look on their children as people and enjoy them as people and not be forever holding on to them and pawing them and fussing about their health and singing them lullabies and tucking them up as though they were everlasting babies But you're not *one* of the normal ones, Mrs Phelps! Look at your sons, if you don't believe me You've destroyed Robert You've swallowed him up until there's nothing left of him but an effete make-believe Now he's gone melancholy mad and disgraced himself And Dave! Poor Dave! The best he can do is dodge the more desperate kinds of unhappiness by

pretending! How he survived at all is beyond me. If you're choking a bit on David, now, that's my fault because you'd have swallowed him up, too, if I hadn't come along to save him! Talk about cannibals! You and your kind beat any cannibals I've ever heard of! And what makes you doubly deadly and dangerous is that people admire you and your kind. They actually admire you! You professional mothers! . . . You see, I'm taking this differently from that poor child upstairs. She's luckier than I am, too. She isn't married to one of your sons. Do you remember what she said about children yesterday? "Have 'em. Love 'em. And leave 'em be."

*Mrs Phelps* You are entitled to your opinions, Christina, just as I am to mine and David is to his. I only hope that he sees the kind of woman he's married. I hope he sees the sordidness, the hardness, the nastiness she offers him for his life.

*Christina* [with an involuntary cry of pain] I'm not nasty! I'm not!

*Mrs Phelps* What have you to offer David?

*Christina* A hard time. A chance to work on his own. A chance to be on his own. Very little money on which to share with me the burden of raising his child. The pleasure of my society. The solace of my love. The enjoyment of my body. To which I have reason to believe he is not indifferent.

*Mrs Phelps* [revolted] Ugh!

*Christina* Can you offer so much?

*Mrs Phelps* I offer a mother's love. Or perhaps you scoff at that?

*Christina* Not if it's kept within bounds. I hope my baby loves me. I'm practically certain I'm going to love my baby. But within bounds.

*Mrs Phelps* And what do you mean by within bounds?

*Christina* To love my baby with as much and as deep respect as I hope my baby will feel for me if I deserve its respect. To love my baby unpossessively; above all, unromantically.

*Mrs Phelps* I suppose that's biology! You don't know the difference between good and evil!

*Christina* As a biologist, though, I do know the difference between life and death. And I know sterility when I see it. I doubt if evil is any more than a fancy name for

sterility. And sterility, of course, is what you offer Dave. Sterility for his mind as well as for his body. That's your professional mother's stock in trade. Only we've been over that, haven't we? Well, Dave! How about it?

*Robert* I think this has gone far enough!

*Mrs Phelps* No! This woman has got to answer me one question.

*Christina* Willingly. What is it?

*Mrs Phelps* How old were you when you married?

*Christina* The same age I am now. Twenty-nine.

*Mrs Phelps* I was twenty.

*Christina* Just Hester's age.

*Mrs Phelps* [riding over her] I was twenty, and my husband was fifteen years older than I. Oh, thirty-five isn't old, but he was a widower, too, and an invalid. Everyone told me I'd made a great match. And I thought I had. But before we'd been married a week, I saw my illusions shattered. I knew at the end of a week how miserable and empty my marriage was. He was good to me. He made very few demands on me. But he never dreamed of bringing the least atom of happiness into my life. Or of romance. . . . Only a woman who has lived without romance knows how to value it. . . . That isn't true of my life, either. I didn't live without romance. I found it. . . . and I'm proud to have found it where you say it doesn't belong. . . . in motherhood. I found it in my two babies. In Dave first and in Robin four years later. I found it in doing for them myself all those things which, nowadays, nurses and governesses are hired to do. To spare mothers! I never asked to be spared. . . . Their father died. The night he died, Robin had croup, and I had to make the final choice between my duties. I stayed with Robin. You, with your modern ideas and your science, Christina, would you have chosen differently? I knew the difference between life and death that night. And I've known it for every step of the way I battled for Robin's health, every step as I taught Dave his gentleness and his generosity.

. . . If I made my mistakes, and I'm only human. I'm sorry for them. But I can point to my two sons and say that my mistakes could not have been serious ones. Think! I was a widow, rich and very

pretty, at twenty-five Think what that means! But I had found my duty and I never swerved from it There was one man in particular A fine man But I resisted I knew that second marriage was not for me Not when I had my sons I put them first, always I shall not stoop to answer any of the foulnesses you have charged me with They are beneath my dignity as a woman and contempt as a mother No, there is one I cannot leave unanswered That word "sterility" Sterility is what I offer David, you say I wonder, is sterility David's word for all he has had of me these thirty years? Let him answer that for himself All my life I have saved to launch my two boys on their careers, saved in vision as well as in money I don't offer my sons a love half dedicated to selfish, personal ambition I don't offer them careers limited by the demands of other careers I offer David a clear field ahead and a complete love to sustain him, a mother's love, until a real marriage, a suitable marriage may be possible for him And I do not deny that I would cut off my right hand and burn the sight out of my eyes to rid my son of you! That is how I answer your impersonal science, Christina

*Christina* [before either of the boys can speak] I see! Well . . . It's a very plausible and effective answer And I'm sure you mean it, and I believe it's sincere But it is the answer of a woman whose husband let her down pretty hard and who turned for satisfaction to her sons I'm almost sorry I can't say more for it, but I can't [She turns from MRS PHELPS to the two sons] It's a pity she didn't marry again Things would have been so much better for both of you if she had [With increasing force, to DAVID] But the fact remains, Dave, that she did separate you and me last night and that she separated us because she couldn't bear the thought of our sleeping together

[They flinch at this, but she downs them]

And she couldn't bear that because she refuses to believe that you're a grown man and capable of desiring a woman And that's because, grown man that you are, down, down in the depths of her, she still wants to suckle you at her breast!

*David* [in a cry of horror] Chris!  
*Robert* [at the same time] Good God!!  
*Mrs Phelps* [at the same time] No!

*Christina* You find that picture revolting, do you? Well, so it is I can't wait any longer for your answer, Dave

*David* I don't think you've any sense of decency left in you Of all the filthy, vile . . .

*Christina* I'm sorry you feel that way

*David* How else can I feel?

*Christina* Is that your answer?

*David* I want to do the right thing, but . . .

*Christina* Remember me, won't you, on Mother's Day! [She calls out] Are you ready, Hester?

*David* You make things mighty hard, Chris, for a man who knows what fair play is and gratitude and all those other things I naturally feel for my mother

*Christina* Do I?

*David* What do you expect me to say?

*Christina* I don't know I've never known That's been the thrill of it

[HESTER, dressed for her journey, appears in the door and stands beside

CHRISTINA CHRISTINA'S arm encloses the younger girl's shoulders]

It's time, Hester

*Hester*. Isn't David coming with us?

*Christina* I'm afraid not

*Hester* Oh, Christina!

*Christina* Sssh! Never mind It can't be helped

*Robert* [breaking out] Hester! Hester! Couldn't we try again? Couldn't you

*Hester* What?

*Robert* I mean what are you going to do now?

*Hester* I don't know [Then a smile comes through] Yes, I do, too, know I'm going to marry an orphan

*Christina* [with a long look at DAVID] Good-bye, Dave

*David* [desperately pleading] Chris, you can't! It isn't fair to me!

*Christina* [still looking at him] I'm sorry it's come to this It might easily have been so . . .

[Her voice chokes with crying She picks up her bag where she put it down beside the door and goes quickly out HESTER, with a reproachful glance at DAVID, follows her DAVID stands

*rigid* MRS PHELPS watches him  
ROBERT covers his face with his hands  
Then the front door slams, and  
DAVID comes suddenly to life]

David [with a frantic cry] Chris! [He turns excitedly to his mother] I'm sorry, Mother, but I guess I'll have to go

Mrs Phelps [reeling] No, Dave! No! No!

David I guess she's right

Mrs Phelps Oh, no!! You mustn't say that! You mustn't say that!

David [holding her off from him] I can't help it She said we were trapped We are trapped I'm trapped

Mrs Phelps [absolutely beyond herself] No! No! She isn't right! She can't be right! I won't believe it!

David [breaking loose from her] I can't help that!

Mrs Phelps [speaking at the same time] For God's sake, Dave, don't go with her! Not with that awful woman, Dave! That wicked woman! For God's sake, don't leave me for her, Dave! [She turns wildly to ROBERT] You know it isn't true, Robin! You know it was vile, what she said! Tell him! Tell him! [But DAVID is gone] Dave! My boy! My boy! My boy! Oh, my God! Dave! She isn't right! She isn't, Dave! Dave! Dave!

[The front door slams a second time

There is an awful pause]

He's gone

Robert [uncovering his face] Who? Dave?

Mrs Phelps Can you see them from the window?

Robert [looking out] Yes They're talking . Now he's kissed her and taken the suitcase Now he's helping Hester . . Hester into the car Now he's getting in . Now they're starting

Mrs Phelps I loved him too much I've been too happy Troubles had to come I must be brave I must bear my troubles bravely

Robert [turning to her] Poor Mother!

Mrs Phelps I must remember that I still have one of my great sons. I must keep my mind on that

Robert [with a step or two toward her] That's right, Mother

Mrs Phelps And we'll go abroad, my great Robin and I, and stay as long as ever we please

Robert [as he kneels beside her]. Yes, Mother

Mrs Phelps [her voice growing stronger as that deeply religious point of view of hers comes to her rescue] And you must remember what David, in his blindness, has forgotten that mother love suffereth long and is kind, envieth not, is not puffed up, is not easily provoked, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things At least, I think my love does?

Robert [engulfed forever] Yes, Mother.

THE END

# THE PLOUGH AND THE STARS

A TRAGEDY IN FOUR ACTS

By SEAN O'CASEY

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## SEAN O'CASEY AND HIS PLAYS

SEAN O'CASEY (Shaun O'Cathasaigh) was born in Dublin in 1884 and spent most of his early life struggling against poverty and disease in the slums. Ill health, poor eyesight, and the necessity of earning a living at the earliest possible moment prevented him from obtaining a formal education. As a boy, O'Casey was sent off to push carts, dig ditches, wrap parcels, deliver papers, later he became a laborer on railroads and construction projects. He early interested himself in the workers' movement, and in the Gaelic League, and took part in the Easter Rebellion of 1916 which forms the setting of *The Plough and the Stars*.

Out of this background, and a love of Shakespeare and the theatre gratified only by a few hard bought visits to the Abbey, O'Casey became the leading playwright of post-war Ireland. His first produced play, *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1922), written, not surprisingly, out of his own experiences, deals with the Fenian troubles with England in 1921. It is a somewhat ramshackle composition with nonetheless the close observation and engaging characters which are his chief stock in trade. He followed this with two trivial farces, little more than exercises in construction. His great talents were fully realized in *Juno and the Paycock* (1925), a tragicomedy which has become a classic of the modern theatre. He recalls the Easter Rebellion in which he had participated, and the play is his observation (without auctorial comment) of the effect of the sacrifices of himself and of those others who thought "no man can do enough for Ireland." It is bitter and disillusioned and at the same time affectionate and understanding. The play is constructed almost in the manner of Tchekhov, with sudden juxtapositions of comedy and pathos, and audiences are often uncertain whether to laugh or to cry. This characteristic structure is what lends O'Casey's works their sense of being a picture of life, of reality.

In *The Plough and the Stars*, O'Casey paints on a larger canvas. He seems here to have recaptured the whole existence of the urban Irish working classes, as Synge had the peasants. The play throbs with life, with humor and tragedy, sympathy and hatred. The genius for comic portraiture which created Captain Boyle in *Juno* produces in this play Fluther Good, the carpenter, Peter Flynn, and the Young Covey. The pathetic and human Juno here becomes Nora and Bessie Burgess. Comic or tragic, these characters are not types but complex human beings.

The play was received by yet another in the long series of riots which have accompanied opening nights at the Abbey Theatre. The audience resented the pessimistic attitude taken about the Revolutionaries, and the degraded picture of city life. At one point during the performance, a dozen women climbed out of the pit and onto the stage to debate the importance of "morality, patriotism, and the virtues of home life" with the actors, and at the end of the play, W. B. Yeats came forward and announced to the howling audience, "You have disgraced yourselves again. Is this to be the ever-recurring celebration of the arrival of Irish genius?"

Yeats, although opposed to the realistic drama as a whole, was a staunch advocate of O'Casey, comparing him at one time with Swift. But after *The Plough* riots, the playwright left Ireland and settled in England where, removed from his immediate inspiration, he began experimenting with form and trying his hand at expressionism. *The Silver Tassie*, his first play in the new genre, was rejected by Yeats with the explanation, "Your great power of the past has been the creation of some unique character who dominated all about him and was himself a main impulse in some action that filled the play from beginning to end." This, coupled with the Tchekhovian structure (although he had seen only a one-act play by the great Russian), is the secret of O'Casey's success and the basis of his technique.

He has continued to write in England semi-expressionist plays and volumes of autobiography. Several of the plays have been produced with some success, most notably *Within the Gates* (1933), but they are largely without life except when a realistically observed or comically conceived Irishman is on the scene, and some of the latest have been marred as drama by a tendency to lecture the audience on communist doctrine. But his



tragedy, *The Plough and the Stars*, and the tragicomic *Juno and the Paycock*, are contributions of lasting value to the contemporary drama, and their great central figures incarnate in the inimitable performances of Barry Fitzgerald are among the most memorable of the post-war theatre

*The Plough and the Stars* was first produced at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, in 1926, with F J McCormick as Clitheroe, Barry Fitzgerald as Fluther, and Maureen Delaney as Bessie Burgess. In the same year it was presented in London with Arthur Sinclair as Fluther and Sara Allgood as Bessie

### CHARACTERS

JACK CLITHEROE, <i>a bricklayer-commandant in the Irish Citizen Army</i>	}	<i>Residents in the tenement</i>
NORA CLITHEROE, <i>his wife</i>		
PETER FLINN, <i>a labourer—Nora's uncle</i>		
THE YOUNG COVEY, <i>a fitter—Clitheroe's cousin</i>		
BESSIE BURGESS, <i>a street fruit-vendor</i>		
MRS GOGAN, <i>a charwoman</i>		
MOLL SER, <i>her consumptive child</i>		
FLUTHER GOOD, <i>a carpenter</i>		
LIEUT LANGON, <i>a civil servant—of the Irish Volunteers</i>		
CAPT BRENNAN, <i>a chicken butcher—of the Irish Citizen Army</i>		
CORPORAL STODDART, <i>of the Wiltshires</i>		
SERGEANT TINLEY, <i>of the Wiltshires</i>		
ROSIE REDMOND, <i>a daughter of "the Digs"</i>		
A BAR-TENDER		
A WOMAN		
THE FIGURE IN THE WINDOW		

ACT I—*The living-room of the Clitheroe flat in a Dublin tenement*

ACT II—*A public-house, outside of which a meeting is being held*

ACT III—*The street outside the Clitheroe tenement*

ACT IV—*The room of Bessie Burgess*

TIME—*Acts I and II, November 1915, Acts III and IV, Easter Week, 1916*

*A few days elapse between Acts III and IV*

# THE PLOUGH AND THE STARS

## ACT ONE

SCENE—The home of the CLITHEROES It consists of the front and back drawing-rooms in a fine old Georgian house, struggling for its life against the assaults of time and the more savage assaults of the tenants. The room shown is the back drawing-room, wide, spacious and lofty. At back is the entrance to the front drawing-room. The space, originally occupied by folding doors, is now draped with casement cloth of a dark purple, decorated with a design in reddish-purple. One of the curtains is pulled aside, giving a glimpse of the front drawing-room, at the end of which can be seen the wide, lofty windows looking out into the street. The room directly in front of the audience is furnished in a way that suggests an attempt towards a finer expression of domestic life. The large fireplace on L is of wood, painted to look like marble (the original has been taken away by the landlord). Below the fireplace, on the wall, is a small mirror. On the mantelshelf are two candlesticks of dark carved wood. Between them is a small clock. Over the clock, on wall, is a picture of "The Sleeping Venus". On the right of the entrance to the front drawing-room is a copy of "The Gleaners," on the opposite side a copy of "The Angelus". Underneath "The Gleaners" is a chest of drawers on which stands a green bowl filled with scarlet dahlias and white chrysanthemums. Near to the fireplace is a couch which at night forms a double bed for CLITHEROE and NORA. Near the end of the room opposite to the fireplace is a gate-legged table, covered with a cloth. On top of the table a huge cavalry sword is lying. To the L above fireplace is a door which leads to a lobby from which the staircase leads to the hall. The floor is covered with a dark green linoleum. The room is dim except where it is illuminated from the glow of the fire.

FLUTHER GOOD is repairing the lock of door, L. A claw hammer is on a chair beside him, and he has a screwdriver in his hand. He is a man of 40 years of age, rarely surrendering to thoughts of anxiety, fond of his

"oil" but determined to conquer the habit before he dies. He is square-jawed and harshly featured, under the left eye is a scar, and his nose is bent from a smashing blow received in a fistic battle long ago. He is bald, save for a few peeping tufts of reddish hair around his ears, and his upper lip is hidden by a scrubby red moustache, embroidered here and there with a grey hair. He is dressed in a seedy black suit, cotton shirt with a soft collar, and wears a very respectable little black bow. On his head is a faded jerry hat, which, when he is excited, he has a habit of knocking farther back on his head, in a series of taps. In an argument he usually fills with sound and fury, generally signifying a row. He is in his shirt sleeves at present, and wears a soiled white apron, from a pocket in which sticks a carpenter's two-foot rule. He has just finished the job of putting on a new lock, and, filled with satisfaction, he is opening and shutting the door, enjoying the completion of a work well done. Sitting at the fire, airing a white shirt, is PETER FLYNN. He is a little, thin bit of a man, with a face shaped like a lozenge, on his cheeks and under his chin is a straggling wry beard of a dirty-white and lemon hue. His face invariably wears a look of animated anguish, mixed with irritated defiance, as if everybody was at war with him, and he at war with everybody. He is cocking his head in such a way that suggests resentment at the presence of FLUTHER, who pays no attention to him, apparently, but is really furtively watching him. PETER is clad in a singlet, white whipcord knee-breeches, and is in his stockinged feet.

A voice is heard speaking outside of door L (it is that of MRS GOGAN talking to someone).

Mrs Gogan [outside door L] Who are you lookin' for, sir? Who? Mrs Clitheroe?

Oh, excuse me. Oh ay, up this way. She's out, I think. I seen her goin'. Oh, you've somethin' for her. Oh, excuse me. You're from Arnott's. I see. You've a parcel for her. Righto. I'll take it. I'll give it to her the min-

ute she comes in It'll be quite safe  
 . . . Oh, sign that . . . Excuse me .  
 Where? . . . Here? . . . No, there,  
 righto Am I to put Maggie or Mrs?  
 What is it? You dunno? Oh, excuse me

[MRS GOGAN opens the door and comes in She is a doleful-looking little woman of 40, insinuating manner and sallow complexion She is fidgety and nervous, terribly talkative, has a habit of taking up things that may be near her and fiddling with them while she is speaking Her heart is aflame with curiosity, and a fly could not come into nor go out of the house without her knowing She has a draper's parcel in her hand, the knot of the twine tying it is untied]

[MRS GOGAN crosses in front of FLUTHER, behind the couch, to the table R, where she puts the parcel, fingering it till she has the paper off, showing a cardboard box PETER, more resentful of this intrusion than of FLUTHER's presence, gets up from the chair, and without looking around, his head carried at an angry cock, marches into the room at back He leaves the shirt on the back of the chair]

[Removing the paper and opening the cardboard box it contains] I wondher what's this now? A hat! [She takes out a hat, black, with decorations in red and gold] God, she's goin' to th' divil lately for style! That hat, now, cost more than a penny Such notions of upperosity she's gettng [Putting the hat on her head] Swank! [Turning to FLUTHER] Eh, Fluther, swank, what!

[FLUTHER looks over at her, then goes on opening and shutting the door]

Fluther She's a pretty little Judy, all the same.

Mrs Gogan Ah, she is, an' she isn't There's prettiness an' prettiness in it I'm always sayin' that her skirts are a little too short for a married woman An' to see her, sometimes of an evenin', in her glad-neck gown would make a body's blood run cold I do be ashamed of me life before her husband An' th' way she thries to be polite, with her "Good mornin', Mrs Gogan," when she's goin' down, an' her "Good evenin', Mrs Gogan," when she's comin' up But there's politeness an' politeness in it

Fluther They seem to get on well together, all th' same

Mrs Gogan Ah, they do, an' they don't The pair o' them used to be like two turtle doves always billin' an' cooin' You couldn't come into th' room but you'd feel, instinctive like, that they'd just been afther kissin' an' cuddlin' each other . . . It often made me shiver, for, afther all, there's kissin' an' cuddlin' in it But I'm thinkin' he's beginnin' to take things more quietly, the mystery of havin' a woman's a mystery no longer . She dhresses herself to keep him with her, but it's no use—afther a month or two, th' wondher of a woman wears off

[MRS GOGAN takes off the hat, and puts it back in the box, going on to rearrange paper round box, and tie it up again]

Fluther I dunno, I dunno Not wishin' to say anything derogatory, I think it's all a question of location when a man finds th' wondher of one woman beginnin' to die, it's usually beginnin' to live in another

Mrs Gogan She's always grumblin' about havin' to live in a tenement house "I wouldn't like to spend me last hour in one, let alone live me life in a tenement," says she "Vaults," says she, "that are hidin' th' dead, instead of homes that are shelterin' th' livin'" "Many a good one," says I, "was reared in a tenement house" Oh, you know, she's a well-up little lassie, too, able to make a shillin' go where another would have to spend a pound She's wipin' th' eyes of th' Covey an' poor oul' Pether—everybody knows that—screwin' every penny she can out o' them, in ordher to turn th' place into a babby-house An' she has th' life frightened out o' them, washin' their face, combin' their hair, wipin' their feet, brushin' their clothes, thrimmin' their nails, cleanin' their teeth—God Almighty, you'd think th' poor men were undhergoin' penal servitude

Fluther [with an exclamation of disgust] A-a-ah, that's goin' beyond th' beyonds in a tenement house That's a little bit too derogatory

[PETER enters from room, back, head elevated and resentful fire in his eyes, he is still in his singlet and trousers, but is now wearing a pair of unlaced boots—possibly to be decent in the presence of MRS GOGAN]

[PETER comes down c and crosses, front of settee, to chair in front of fire, he

*turns the shirt which he has left to air on the back of the chair, then goes, front of couch, to the chest of drawers, back L, opens drawer after drawer, looking for something, as he fails to find it, he closes each drawer with a snap. He jerks out things neatly folded, and shoves them back into the drawers any way]*

*Peter [in anguish, snapping a drawer shut] Well, God Almighty, give me patience*

*[PETER returns, front of couch, to the fireplace, gives the shirt a vicious turn on the back of the chair, and goes back, front of couch, to room, back, FLUTHER and MRS GOGAN watching him furtively all the time]*

*Mrs Gogan [curiously] I wondher what is he foostherin' for now?*

*Fluther [coming c] He's adornin' himself for the meeting to-night [He pulls a handbill from one of his pockets, and reads] "Great Demonstration an' Torchlight Procession around places in the City sacred to th' memory of Irish Pathriots to be concluded be a meetin', at which will be taken an oath of fealty to th' Irish Republic Formation in Parnell Square at eight o'clock" Well, they can hold it for Fluther I'm up th' pole, no more dhrink for Fluther It's three days now since I touched a dhrop, an' I feel a new man already*

*[He goes back to door L]*

*Mrs Gogan Isn't oul' Peter a funny-lookin' little man? Lake somethun' you'd pick off a Christmas Tree When he's dhressed up in his canonicals, you'd wondher where he'd been got God forgive me, when I see him in them, I always think he must ha' had a Mormon for a father! He an' th' Covey can't abide each other, th' pair o' them is always at it, thryin' to best each other There'll be blood dhrawn one o' these days*

*Fluther How is it that Clitheroe himself, now, doesn't have anythin' to do with th' Citizen Army? A couple o' months ago, an' you'd hardly ever see him without his gun, an' th' Red Hand o' Liberty Hall in his hat*

*Mrs Gogan Just because he wasn't made a Captain of He wasn't goin' to be in anything where he couldn't be conspishuous He was so cocksure o' being made one that he bought a Sam Browne belt, an' was always puttin' it on an' standin' at th' door*

*showing it off, till th' man came an' put out th' street lamps on him God, I think he used to bring it to bed with him! But I'm tellin' you herself was delighted that that cock didn't crow, for she's like a clockin' hen if he leaves her sight for a minute*

*[While she is talking she takes up a book from the table, looks into it in a near-sighted way, and then leaves it back She now lifts up the sword, and proceeds to examine it]*

*Be th' look of it, this must ha' been a general's sword All th' gold lace an' th' fine figaries on it Sure it's twiced too big for him*

*[FLUTHER crosses from door L behind couch, back of table, where MRS GOGAN is examining the sword, and looks at it, standing to L of MRS GOGAN]*

*Fluther [contemptuously] Ah, it's a baby's rattle he ought to have, an' he as he is, with thoughts tossin' in his head of what may happen to him on th' Day of Judgment*

*[PETER appears at the curtained door, back, sees MRS GOGAN with the sword, and a look of vexation comes on to his face He comes down c to the table, snatches the sword out of MRS GOGAN's hands, and bangs it back on the table He then returns into room, back, without speaking]*

*Mrs Gogan [to PETER, as he snatches the sword] Oh, excuse me [To FLUTHER] Isn't he the surly oul' rascal, Fluther?*

*[She wanders from the table, back of the couch, to the chest of drawers, where she stops for a few moments, pulling out drawers and pushing them in again]*

*Fluther [leaning against left side of the table] Take no notice of him You'd think he was dumb, but when you get his goat, or he has a few jars up, he's vice versa*

*[FLUTHER coughs MRS GOGAN, who has wandered from the chest of drawers, down L, to the fireplace, where she is fingering PETER's shirt, turns to look at FLUTHER, as soon as she hears the cough]*

*Mrs Gogan [with an ominous note in her voice] Oh, you've got a cold on you, Fluther*

*Fluther [carelessly] Ah, it's only a little one*

*Mrs Gogan* You'd want to be careful, all th' same I knew a woman, a big lump of a woman, red-faced an' round-bodied, a little awkward on her feet, you'd think, to look at her, she could put out her two arms an' lift a two-storied house on th' top of her head, got a ticklin' in her throat, an' a little cough, an' th' next mornin' she had a little catchin' in her chest, an' they had just time to wet her lips with a little rum, an' off she went [*She begins to look at and handle the shirt*]

*Fluther* [*a little nervously*] It's only a little cold I have, there's nothing derogatory wrong with me

*Mrs Gogan* [*warningly*] I dunno, there's many a man this minute lowerin' a pint, thinkin' of a woman, or pickin' out a winner, or doin' work as you're doin', while th' hearse dhrawn be th' horses with the black plumes is dhrrivin' up to his own hall door, an' a voice that he doesn't hear is muttherin' in his ear, "Earth to earth, an' ashes t' ashes, an' dust to dust"

*Fluther* [*faintly, affected by her talk*] A man in th' pink o' health should have a holy horror of allowin' thoughts o' death to be festherin' in his mind, for [*with a frightened cough*] be God, I think I'm afther gettin' a little catch in me chest that time—it's a creepy thing to be thinkin' about

[*FLUTHER sits weakly in chair L of table*]

*Mrs Gogan* It is, an' it isn't, it's both bad an' good It always gives meself a kind o' thresspassin' joy to feel meself movin' along in a mournin' coach, an' me thinkin' that, maybe, th' next funeral'll be me own, an' glad, in a quiet way, that this is somebody else's

*Fluther* [*very frightened*] An' a curious kind of a gaspin' for breath—I hope there's nothin' derogatory wrong with me

*Mrs Gogan* [*examining the shirt*]. Frills on it, like a woman's petticoat

*Fluther* [*panic-stricken*] Suddenly gettin' hot, an' then, just as suddenly, gettin' cold

*Mrs Gogan* [*holding out the shirt towards FLUTHER*] How would you like to be wearin' this Lord Mayor's nightdress, Fluther?

*Fluther* [*vehemently*] Blast you an' your nightshirt! Is a man fermentin' with fear to stick th' showin' off to him of a thing that looks like a shinin' shroud?

*Mrs Gogan* [*startled at FLUTHER's vehemence*] Oh, excuse me.

[*PETER appears at curtained door, back Sees his shirt in MRS GOGAN's hand, comes rapidly down c, goes front of couch to MRS GOGAN, snatches shirt from her, and replaces it on the back of the chair; he returns the same way to room, back*]

*Peter* [*loudly, as he goes to room, back*] Well, God Almighty give me patience!

*Mrs Gogan* [*to PETER*] Oh, excuse me [*There is heard a cheer from the men working outside on the street, followed by the clang of tools being thrown down, then silence*]

[*Running into the back room to look out of the window*] What's the men repairin' th' streets cheerin' for?

*Fluther* [*sitting down weakly on a chair*] You can't sneeze but that oul' one wants to know th' why an' th' wherefore. I feel as dizzy as bedamned! I hope I didn't give up th' beer too suddenly.

[*The COVEY comes in by door L He is about 25, tall, thin, with lines on his face that form a perpetual protest against life as he conceives it to be Heavy seams fall from each side of nose, down around his lips, as if they were suspenders keeping his mouth from falling He speaks in a slow, wailing drawl, more rapidly when he is excited He is dressed in dungarees, and is wearing a vividly red tie He comes down c and flings his cap with a gesture of disgust on the table, and begins to take off his overalls*]

*Mrs Gogan* [*to the COVEY, as she runs back into the room*]. What's after happenin', Covey?

*The Covey* [*with contempt*] Th' job's stopped They've been mobilized to march in th' demonstration to-night undher th' Plough an' th' Stars Didn't you hear them cheerin', th' mugs They have to renew their political baptismal vows to be faithful in *seculo seculorum*

*Fluther* [*sitting on the chair L of table, forgetting his fear in his indignation*] There's no reason to bring religion into it I think we ought to have as great a regard for religion as we can, so as to keep it out of as many things as possible

*The Covey* [*pausing in the taking off of his dungarees*] Oh, you're one o' the boys

that climb into religion as high as a short Mass on Sunday mornin's? I suppose you'll be singin' songs o' Sion an' songs o' Tara at th' meetin', too

*Fluther* We're all Irishmen, anyhow, aren't we?

*The Covey [with hand outstretched, and in a professional tone]* Look here, comrade, there's no such thing as an Irishman, or an Englishman, or a German or a Turk, we're all only human bein's. Scientifically speakin', it's all a question of the accidental gatherin' together of mollycewels an' atoms

[*PETER comes in from room, back, with a stiff collar in his hand, comes down c, crosses, in front of couch, to the mirror on the wall L, below the fireplace. He stands before the mirror and tries to put on his collar. FLUTHER gets up from the chair, goes c and stands to R of the COVEY*]

*Fluther* Mollycewels an' atoms! D'ye think I'm goin' to listen to you thryin' to juggle Fluther's mind with complicated cunundhrums of mollycewels an' atoms?

*The Covey [rather loudly]* There's nothin' complicated in it. There's no fear o' th' Church tellin' you that mollycewels is a stickin' together of millions of atoms o' sodium, carbon, potassium o' iodide, et-cetera, that, accordin' to th' way they're mixed, make a flower, a fish, a star that you see shinin' in th' sky, or a man with a big brain like me, or a man with a little brain like you!

*Fluther [more loudly still]* There's no necessity to be raisin' your voice, shoutin's no manifestin' forth of a growin' mind

[*FLUTHER and the COVEY turn to look at PETER*]

*Peter [struggling with his collar]* God give me patience with this thing. She makes these collars as stiff with starch as a shimm' band of solid steel! She does it purposely to thry an' thwart me. If I can't get it on to the singlet, how in the name of God am I goin' to get it on the shirt!

[*FLUTHER and the COVEY face each other again*]

*The Covey [loudly]* There's no use o' arguin' with you, it's education you want, comrade

*Fluther [sarcastically]* The Covey an' God made th' world I suppose, wha'?

*The Covey [jeering]* When I hear some men talkin' I'm inclined to disbelieve that

th' world's eight-hundhred million years old, for it's not long since th' fathers o' some o' them crawled out o' th' sheltherin' slime o' the sea

*Mrs Gogan [from room at back]* There, they're afther formin' fours, an' now they're goin' to march away

*Fluther [scornfully taking no notice of MRS GOGAN]* Mollycewels! [*He begins to untie his apron*] What about Adam an' Eve?

*The Covey* Well, what about them?

*Fluther [fiercely]* What about them, you?

*The Covey* Adam an' Eve! Is that as far as you've got? Are you still thinkin' there was nobody in th' world before Adam an' Eve? [*Loudly*] Did you ever hear, man, of th' skeleton of th' man o' Java?

*Peter [casting the collar from him]* Blast it, blast it, blast it!

[*PETER angrily picks up the collar he has thrown on the floor, goes up c, right of couch, to the chest of drawers, and begins to hunt again in the drawers*]

*Fluther [to the Covey, as he viciously folds apron]* Ah, you're not goin' to be let tap your rubbidge o' thoughts into th' mind o' Fluther

*The Covey* You're afraid to listen to th' thruth!

*Fluther [pugnaciously]* Who's afraid?

*The Covey* You are!

*Fluther [with great contempt]* G'way, you wurum!

*The Covey* Who's a wurum?

*Fluther* You are, or you wouldn't talk th' way you're talkin'

[*MRS GOGAN wanders in from room, back, turns L, sees PETER at the chest of drawers, turns back, comes down c, goes, front of couch, to the fireplace*]

*The Covey* Th' oul', ignorant savage leppin' up in you, when science shows you that th' head of your god is an empty one. Well, I hope you're enjoyin' th' blessin' o' havin' to live be th' sweat of your brow

*Fluther* You'll be kickin' an' yellin' for th' priest yet, me boyo. I'm not goin' to stand silent an' simple listenin' to a thick like you makin' a maddenin' mockery o' God Almighty. It 'ud be a nice derogatory thing on me conscience, an' me dyin' to look back in rememberin' shame of talkin'

to a word-weavin' little ignorant yahoo of a red flag Socialist!

Mrs Gogan [at the fireplace, turning to look at the disputants] For God's sake, Fluther, dhrop it, there's always th' makin's of a row in the mention of religion

[She turns her head, and looks at the picture of "The Sleeping Venus," hanging over the mantelpiece. She looks at it intently and a look of astonishment comes on her face]

God bless us, it's the picture of a naked woman [With a titter] Look, Fluther

[FLUTHER looks over at the fireplace, comes slowly to the fireplace, looks steadily at the picture. PETER, hearing what was said, leaves the chest of drawers, and comes down, standing a little behind FLUTHER and MRS GOGAN, and looks at the picture. The COVEY looks on from c]

Fluther What's undher it? [Reading slowly] "Georgina The Sleeping Vennis" Oh, that's a terrible picture. Oh, that's a shockin' picture! [Peering into it with evident pleasure] Oh, the one that got that taken, she must ha' been a prime lassie!

Peter [laughing in a silly way, with head tilted back] Hee, hee, hee, hee, hee!

Fluther [indignantly, to PETER] What are you hee, hee-in' for? [Pointing to the picture] That's a nice thing to be hee, hee-in' at. Where's your morality, man?

Mrs Gogan [looking intently at it] God forgive us, it's not right to be lookin' at it

Fluther It's nearly a derogatory thing to be in th' room where it is

Mrs Gogan [giggling hysterically] I couldn't stop any longer in th' same room with three men, afther lookin' at it!

[MRS GOGAN goes upstage L, and out by door L. The COVEY, who has taken off his dungarees, seeing PETER's shirt on the chair, throws dungarees over it with a contemptuous movement]

Peter [roused by the COVEY's action] Where are you throwin' your dungarees? Are you thryin' to thwart an' torment me again?

The Covey Who's thryin' to thwart you?

[PETER takes the dungarees from the back of the chair and flings them violently on floor]

Peter You're not goin' to make me lose me temper, me young covey!

[The COVEY, in retaliation, takes PETER's white shirt from the back of the chair, and flings it violently on the floor]

The Covey If you're Nora's pet aself, you're not goin' to get your own way in everything

[The COVEY moves to the back end of the table, enjoying PETER's anger]

Peter [plaintively, with his eyes looking up at the ceiling] I'll say nothin' I'll leave you to th' day when th' all-pitiful, all-merciful, all-lovin' God'll be handin' you to th' angels to be riev'n' an' roastin' you, tearin' an' tormentin' you, burnin' an' blastin' you!

The Covey Aren't you th' little malignant oul' bastard, you lemon-whiskered oul' swine!

[PETER rushes to the table, takes up the sword, draws it from its scabbard, and makes for the COVEY, who runs round the table R, followed by PETER]

The Covey [dodging round the table—to FLUTHER] Fluther, hold him, there. It's a nice thing to have a lunatic, like this, lashing round with a lethal weapon!

[The COVEY, after running round the table, rushes up c, and runs back of couch, out of door L, which he bangs to behind him in the face of PETER. FLUTHER remains near the fireplace, looking on]

Peter [hammering at the door—to the COVEY, outside] Lemme out, lemme out. Isn't it a poor thing for a man who wouldn't say a word against his greatest enemy to have to listen to that Covey's twartin' animosities, shovin' poor, patient people into a lashin' out of curses that darken his soul with th' shadow of th' wrath of th' last day!

Fluther Why d'ye take notice of him? If he seen you didn't, he'd say nothin' derogatory

Peter I'll make him stop his laughin' an' leerin', jibin' an' jeerin' an' scarifyin' people with his corner-boy insinuations! He's always thryin' to rouse me if it's not a song, it's a whistle, if it isn't a whistle, it's a cough. But you can taunt an' taunt—I'm laughin' at you, he, hee, hee, hee, hee, hee!

The Covey [jeering loudly through the keyhole] Dear harp o' me counthry, in darkness I found thee,  
The dark cham of silence had hung o'er thee long—



*Peter [frantically to FLUTHER] Jasus, d'ye hear that? D'ye hear him soundin' forth his divil-souled song o' provocation? [Battering at door L] When I get out I'll do for you, I'll do for you, I'll do for you! The Covey [through the keyhole] Cuckoo-oo!*

*[NORA enters by door L. She is a young woman of 23, alert, swift, full of nervous energy, and a little anxious to get on in the world. The firm lines of her face are considerably opposed by a soft, amorous mouth, and gentle eyes. When her firmness fails her, she persuades with her feminine charm. She is dressed in a tailor-made costume, and wears around her neck a silver fox fur]*

*Nora [running in and pushing PETER away from the door] Oh, can I not turn me back but th' two o' yours are at it like a pair o' fightin'-cocks! Uncle Peter Uncle Peter UNCLE PETER!*

*Peter [vociferously] Oh, Uncle Peter, Uncle Peter be damned! D'ye think I'm goin' to give a free pass to th' young Covey to turn me whole life into a Holy Manual o' penances an' martyrdoms?*

*The Covey [angrily rushing into the room] If you won't exercise some sort o' contrhol over that Uncle Peter o' yours, there'll be a funeral, an' it won't be me that'll be in th' hearse!*

*Nora [c back, between PETER and the COVEY, to the COVEY] Are yours always goin' to be tearin' down th' little bit of respectability that a body's thyrin' to build up? Am I always goin' to be havin' to nurse yours into th' habit o' thyrin' to keep up a little bit of appearance?*

*The Covey Why weren't you here to see th' way he run at me with th' sword?*

*Peter What did you call me a lemon-whiskered oul' swine for?*

*Nora If th' two o' yours don't thry to make a generous altheration in your goin's on an' keep on thyrin' t' inaugurate th' customs o' th' rest o' th' house into this place, yours can fit into other lodgin's where your bowsey batthin' 'ill meet, maybe, with an encore*

*[The COVEY comes down, back of couch to the fire, and sits down in the chair where PETER's shirt had hung, he takes a book from a pocket and begins to read]*

*Peter [to NORA] Would you like to be called a lemon-whiskered oul' swine?*

*[NORA takes the sword from PETER, goes to the table, puts it back in the scabbard, goes to the chest of drawers, back L, and leaves it on the chest of drawers]*

*Nora [to PETER] If you attempt to wag that sword of yours at anybody again, it'll have to be taken off you, an' put in a safe place away from babies that don't know the danger of them things*

*[NORA goes across back, taking off her hat and coat, which she leaves PETER comes down c, takes up the shirt from the floor, and goes back c towards room, back]*

*Peter [at entrance to room, back] Well, I'm not goin' to let anybody call me a lemon-whiskered oul' swine!*

*[PETER goes into room, back FLUTHER moves from the fireplace, L of couch, to door L, which he begins to open and shut, trying the movement]*

*Fluther [half to himself, half to NORA] Openin' an' shuttin' now with a well-mannered motion, like a door of a select bar in a high-class pub*

*[NORA takes up the hat and coat from the table, carries them into the room, back, leaves them there, comes out, goes to the dresser, above table R, and puts a few tea things on the table]*

*Nora [to the COVEY, as she lays table for tea] An', once for all, Willie, you'll have to thry to deliver yourself from th' desire to practice o' provokin' oul' Pether into a wild forgetfulness of what's proper an' allowable in a respectable home*

*The Covey Well, let him mind his own business, then Yestherday, I caught him hee-hee-in' out of him an' he readin' bits out of Jenersky's Thesis on th' Orign, Development an' Consolndation of th' Evolutionary Idea of th' Proletariat*

*Nora Now, let it end at that, for God's sake, Jack'll be in any minute, an' I'm not goin' to have th' quiet of his evenin' tossed about in an everlastin' uproar between you an' Uncle Pether*

*[NORA crosses back to FLUTHER L, and stands on his R]*

*Nora [to FLUTHER] Well, did you manage to settle the lock yet, Mr Good?*

*Fluther [opening and shutting the door] It's betther than a new one, now, Mrs*



Cltheroe, it's almost ready to open and shut of its own accord

Nora [*giving him a coin*] You're a whole man How many pints will that get you?

Fluther [*seriously*] Ne'er a one at all, Mrs Cltheroe, for Fluther's on th' wather waggon now You could stan' where you're stannin' chantin', "Have a glass o' malt, Fluther, Fluther, have a glass o' malt," till th' bells would be ringin' th' ould year out an' th' New Year in, an' you'd have as much chance o' movin' Fluther as a tune on a tin whistle would move a deaf man an' he dead

[*As NORA is opening and shutting the door, MRS BESSIE BURGESS appears at it She is a woman of 40, vigorously built Her face is a dogged one, hardened by toil, and a little coarsened by drink She looks scornfully and viciously at NORA for a few moments before she speaks*]

Bessie Puttin' a new lock on her door afraid her poor neighbours ud break through an' steal [*In a loud tone*] Maybe, now, they're a damn sight more honest than your ladyship checkin' th' children playin' on th' stairs gettin' on th' nerves of your ladyship Complainin' about Bessie Burgess singin' her hymns at night, when she has a few up [*She comes in half-way on the threshold, and screams*] Bessie Burgess 'll sing whenever she damn well likes!

[*NORA tries to shut the door, but BESSIE violently shoves it in, and, gripping NORA by the shoulders, shakes her*]

Bessie [*violently*] You little overdressed throllope, you, for one pin, I'd paste th' white face o' you!

Nora [*frightened*] Fluther, Fluther!

Fluther [*breaking the hold of BESSIE from NORA*] Now, now, Bessie, Bessie, leave poor Mrs Cltheroe alone, she'd do no one any harm, an' minds no one's business but her own

Bessie Why is she always thryin' to speak proud things, an' lookin' like a mighty one in th' congregation o' th' people!

[*THE COVEY looks up from his book, watches the encounter, but does not leave his seat by the fire*]

[*NORA sinks down on back of the couch JACK CLTHEROE enters by door, L He is a tall, well-made fellow of 25 His face has none of the strength of NORA'S It is a face in which is the desire for au-*

*thority, without the power to attain it*]

Cltheroe [*excitedly*] What's up? What's afther happenin'?

Fluther Nothin', Jack Nothin' It's all over now Come on, Bessie, come on

Cltheroe [*coming to couch and bending over NORA—anxiously*] What's wrong, Nora? Did she say anything to you?

Nora [*agitatedly*] She was bargin' out of her, an' I only told her to go up ower that to her own place, an' before I knew where I was, she flew at me, like a tiger, an' tried to guzzle me

[*CLTHEROE goes close to BESSIE, standing in front of the chest of drawers, and takes hold of her arm to get her away*]

Cltheroe Get up to your own place, Mrs Burgess, and don't you be interferin' with my wife, or it'll be th' worse for you Go on, go on!

Bessie [*as CLTHEROE is pushing her out*] Mind who you're pushin', now . . . I attend me place of worship, anyhow Not like some of them that go neither church, chapel or meetin' house If me son was home from the threnches, he'd see me righted

[*FLUTHER takes BESSIE by the arm, and brings her out by the door L CLTHEROE closes the door behind them, returns to NORA, and puts his arm around her The COVEY resumes his reading*]

Cltheroe [*his arm around her*] There, don't mind that old bitch, Nora, darling, I'll soon put a stop to her interferin'

Nora Some day or another, when I'm here be meself, she'll come in an' do somethin' desperate

Cltheroe [*kissing her*] Oh, sorra fear of her doin' anythin' desperate I'll talk to her to-morrow when she's sober A tast o' me mind that'll shock her into the sensibility of behavin' herself!

[*NORA gets up, crosses to the dresser R, and finishes laying the table for tea She catches sight of the dungarees on the floor and speaks indignantly to COVEY CLTHEROE leaves his hat on the chest of drawers, and sits, waiting for tea, on the couch*]

Nora [*to COVEY*] Wilhe, is that the place for your dungarees?

Covey [*irritably rising, and taking them from the floor*] Ah, they won't do the floor any harm, will they?

*[He carries them up c, into room back, comes back again, down c, and sits by fire NORA crosses from the table to the fire, gets the teapot from the hob, and returns to the table]*

Nora *[to CLITHEROE and COVEY]* Tea's ready

*[CLITHEROE and COVEY go to the table and sit down L of same, COVEY nearest the audience NORA sits down on R of table, leaving the chair for PETER below, on same side]*

Nora *[calling towards room, back]* Uncle Peter, Uncle Peter, tea's ready!

*[PETER comes in from room back PETER is in the full dress of the Irish National Foresters bright green, gold-braded coat, white breeches, black top boots and frilled, white shirt He carries a large black slouch hat, from which waves a long white ostrich plume, in his hand He puts the hat on the chest of drawers beside the sword, he comes down c, goes round front end of table, and sits on the vacant seat facing COVEY on opposite side of the table They eat for a few moments in silence, the COVEY furtively watching PETER with scorn in his eyes, PETER knows this, and is fidgety]*

The Covey *[provokingly]* Another cut o' bread, Uncle Peter?

*[PETER maintains a dignified silence]*

Clitheroe It's sure to be a great meetin' to-night We ought to go, Nora

Nora *[decisively]* I won't go, Jack, you can go if you wish

*[A pause]*

The Covey *[with great politeness, to PETER]* D'ye want th' sugar, Uncle Peter?

Peter *[explosively]* Now, are you goin' to start your thryin' an' your twartin' again?

Nora Now, Uncle Peter, you mustn't be so touchy, Wilhe has only assed you if you wanted th' sugar

Peter *[angrily]* He doesn't care a damn whether I want th' sugar or no He's only thryin' to thwart me!

Nora *[angrily, to the COVEY]* Can't you let him alone, Wilhe? If he wants the sugar, let him stretch his hand out an' get it himself!

The Covey *[to PETER]* Now, if you want the sugar, you can stretch out your hand and get it yourself!

*[A pause]*

Clitheroe To-night is th' first chance that Brennan has got of showing himself off since they made a Captain of him—why, God only knows It'll be a treat to see him swankin' it at th' head of the Citizen Army carryin' th' flag of the Plough an' th' Stars *[Looking roguishly at NORA]* He was sweet on you, once, Nora?

Nora He may have been I never liked him I always thought he was a bit of a thick

The Covey They're bringin' nice disgrace on that banner now

Clitheroe *[to COVEY, remonstratively]* How are they bringin' disgrace on it?

The Covey *[snappily]* Because it's a Labour flag, an' was never meant for politics

What does th' design of th' field plough, bearin' on it th' stars of th' heavenly plough, mean, if it's not Communism? It's a flag that should only be used when we're buildin' th' barricades to fight for a Workers' Republic!

Peter *[with a puff of derision]* P-phuh

The Covey *[angrily, to PETER]* What are you phuhin' out o' you for? Your mind is th' mind of a mummy *[Rising]* I betther go an' get a good place to have a look at Ireland's warriors passin' by

*[He goes into room L, and returns with his cap]*

Nora *[to the COVEY]* Oh, Wilhe, brush your clothes before you go

The Covey *[carelessly]* Oh, they'll do well enough

Nora Go an' brush them, th' brush is in th' drawer there

*[The COVEY goes to the drawer, muttering, gets the brush, and starts to brush his clothes]*

The Covey *[reciting at PETER, as he does so]*

Oh, where's the slave so lowly,  
Condemn'd to chains unholy,  
Who, could he burst his bonds at first,  
Would pine beneath them slowly?

We tread th' land that bore us,  
Th' green flag glitters o'er us,  
Th' friends we've tried are by our side,  
An' th' foe we hate before us!

Peter *[leaping to his feet in a whirl of rage]* Now, I'm tellin' you, me young Covey, once for all, that I'll not stick any

longer these titherin' taunts of yours, rovin' around to sing your slights an' slanders, reddenin' th' mind of a man to th' thinkin' an' sayin' of things that sicken his soul with sin! [*Hysterically, lifting up a cup to fling at the Covey*] Be God, I'll—

*Clitheroe* [*catching his arm*] Now then, nonè o' that, none o' that!

*Nora* [*loudly*] Uncle Pether, Uncle Pether, UNCLE PETHER!

*The Covey* [*at the door L, about to go out*] Isn't that th' malignant oul' varmint! Lookin' like th' illegitimate son of an illegitimate child of a corporal in th' Mexican army!

[*He goes out door L*]

*Peter* [*plaintively*] He's afther leavin' me now in such a state of agitation that I won't be able to do meself justice when I'm marchin' to th' meetin'

[*NORA jumps up from the table, crosses back end of table to the chest of drawers, back, and takes up PETER's sword*]

*Nora* Oh, for God's sake, here, buckle your sword on, an' go to your meetin', so that we'll have at least one hour of peace

[*PETER gets up from the chair, goes over to NORA, and she helps him to put on his sword*]

*Clitheroe* For God's sake, hurry him up out o' this, Nora

*Peter* Are yous all goin' to thry to start to thwart me now?

*Nora* [*putting on his plumed hat*] S-s-sh Now, your hat's on, your house is thatched, off you pop! [*She gently pushes him from her, towards door L*]

*Peter* [*going and turning as he reaches the door L*] Now, if that young Covey—

*Nora* Go on, go on

[*He goes out door L*]

[*CLITHEROE goes from the table to the couch and sits down on end nearest the fire, lights a cigarette, and looks thoughtfully into the fire NORA takes things from the table, and puts them on the dresser. She goes into room, back, and comes back with a lighted shaded lamp, which she puts on the table She then goes on tidying things on the dresser*]

[*Softly speaking over from the dresser, to CLITHEROE*] A penny for them, Jack

*Clitheroe* Me? Oh, I was thinkin' of nothing

*Nora* You were thinkin' of th' meetin' Jack When we were courtin' an' I wanted you to go, you'd say, "Oh, to hell with meetin's," an' that you felt lonely in cheerin' crowds when I was absent An' we weren't a month married when you began that you couldn't keep away from them

*Clitheroe* [*crossly*] Oh, that's enough about th' meetin' It looks as if you wanted me to go th' way you're talkin' You were always at me to give up the Citizen Army, an' I gave it up surely that ought to satisfy you.

*Nora* [*from dresser*] Aye, you gave it up, because you got the sulks when they didn't make a captain of you

[*She crosses over to CLITHEROE, and sits on the couch to his R*]

*Nora* [*softly*] It wasn't for my sake, Jack

*Clitheroe* For your sake or no, you're benefitin' by it, aren't you? I didn't forget this was your birthday, did I? [*He puts his arms around her*] And you liked your new hat, didn't you, didn't you? [*He kisses her rapidly several times*]

*Nora* [*panting*] Jack, Jack, please, Jack! I thought you were tired of that sort of thing long ago.

*Clitheroe* Well, you're finding out now that I amn't tired of it yet, anyhow Mrs Clitheroe doesn't want to be kissed, sure she doesn't? [*He kisses her again*] Little, little red-lipped Nora!

*Nora* [*coquettishly removing his arm from around her*] Oh, yes, your little, little red-lipped Nora's a sweet little girl when th' fit seizes you, but your little, little red-lipped Nora has to clean your boots every mornin', all the same

*Clitheroe* [*with a movement of irritation*] Oh, well, if we're goin' to be snotty!

[*A pause*]

*Nora* It's lookin' like as if it was you that was goin' to be snotty! Bridlin' up with bitherness, th' minute a body attempts t'open her mouth

*Clitheroe* Is it any wondher, turnin' a tendher sayin' into a meanin' o' malice an' spite!

*Nora* It's hard for a body to be always keepin' her mind bent on makin' thoughts that'll be no longer than th' length of your own satisfaction

[*A pause*]

Nora [standing up] If we're goin' to dhribble th' time away sittin' here like a pair o' cranky mummies, I'd be as well sewin' or doin' something about th' place

[She looks appealingly at him for a few moments, he doesn't speak. She swiftly sits down beside him, and puts her arm around his neck]

Nora [imploringly] Ah, Jack, don't be so cross!

Clitheroe [doggedly] Cross? I'm not cross, I'm not a bit cross. It was yourself started it.

Nora [coaxingly] I didn't mean to say anything out o' th' way. You take a body up too quickly, Jack. [In an ordinary tone as if nothing of an angry nature had been said] You didn't offer me evenin' allowance yet.

[CLITHEROE silently takes out a cigarette for her and himself and lights both]

[Trying to make conversation] How quiet th' house is now, they must be all out.

Clitheroe [rather shortly] I suppose so.  
Nora [rising from the seat] I'm longin' to show you me new hat, to see what you think of it. Would you like to see it?

Clitheroe Ah, I don't mind.

[NORA hesitates a moment, then goes up to the chest of drawers, takes the hat out of the box, comes down, stands front of the couch, looks into the mirror on the wall below the fireplace, and fixes hat on her head. She then turns to face CLITHEROE]

Nora Well, how does Mr Clitheroe like me new hat?

Clitheroe It suits you, Nora, it does right enough.

[He stands up, puts his hand beneath her chin, and tilts her head up. She looks at him roguishly. He bends down and kisses her]

Nora Here, sit down, an' don't let me hear another cross word out of you for th' rest o' the night.

[The two sit on the couch again, CLITHEROE nearest the fire]

Clitheroe [his arms round NORA] Little red-lipped Nora.

Nora [with a coaxing movement of her body towards him] Jack!

Clitheroe [tightening his arms around her] Well?

Nora You haven't sung me a song since

our honeymoon. Sing me one now, do please, Jack!

Clitheroe What song? "Since Maggie Went Away"?

Nora Ah, no, Jack, not that, it's too sad "When You Said You Loved Me."

[Clearing his throat, CLITHEROE thinks for a moment, and then begins to sing. NORA, putting an arm around him, nestles her head on his breast and listens delightedly]

Clitheroe [singing verses following to the air of "When You and I Were Young, Maggie"]

Th' violets were scenting th' woods, Nora,  
Displaying their charm to th' bee,  
When I first said I lov'd only you, Nora,  
An' you said you lov'd only me!

Th' chestnut blooms gleam'd through th' glade, Nora,  
A robin sang loud from a tree,  
When I first said I lov'd only you, Nora,  
An' you said you lov'd only me!

Th' golden-rob'd daffodils shone, Nora,  
An' danc'd in th' breeze on th' lea,  
When I first said I lov'd only you, Nora,  
An' you said you lov'd only me!

Th' trees, birds an' bees sang a song, Nora,  
Of happier transports to be,  
When I first said I lov'd only you, Nora,  
An' you said you lov'd only me!

[NORA kisses him]

[A knock is heard at the door, a pause as they listen. NORA clings closely to CLITHEROE. Another knock, more imperative than the first]

I wonder who can that be, now?

Nora [a little nervous] Take no notice of it, Jack, they'll go away in a minute.

[Another knock, followed by the voice of CAPTAIN BRENNAN]

The Voice of Capt Brennan. Commandant Clitheroe, Commandant Clitheroe, are you there? A message from General Jim Connolly.

Clitheroe [taking her arms from round him] Damn it, it's Captain Brennan.

Nora [anxiously] Don't mind him, don't mind, Jack. Don't break our happiness.

Pretend we're not in. Let us forget everything to-night but our two selves!

Clitheroe [reassuringly] Don't be

alarmed, darling, I'll just see what he wants, an' send him about his business

Nora [*tremulously—putting her arms around him*] No, no Please, Jack, don't open it Please, for your own little Nora's sake!

Clitheroe [*taking her arms away and rising to open the door*]. Now don't be silly, Nora

[CLITHEROE opens door, and admits a young man in the full uniform of the Irish Citizen Army—green suit, slouch green hat caught up at one side by a small Red Hand badge, Sam Browne belt, with a revolver in the holster He carries a letter in his hand When he comes in he smartly salutes CLITHEROE The young man is CAPTAIN BRENNAN He stands in front of the chest of drawers]

Capt Brennan [*giving the letter to CLITHEROE*]. A dispatch from General Connolly

Clitheroe [*reading While he is doing so, BRENNAN'S eyes are fixed on NORA, who droops as she sits on the lounge*] "Commandant Clitheroe is to take command of the eighth battalion of the I.C.A. which will assemble to proceed to the meeting at nine o'clock He is to see that all units are provided with full equipment two days' rations and fifty rounds of ammunition At two o'clock A.M. the army will leave Liberty Hall for a reconnaissance attack on Dublin Castle—Com-Gen Connolly"

Clitheroe [*in surprise, to CAPT BRENNAN*] I don't understand this Why does General Connolly call me Commandant?

Capt Brennan Th' Staff appointed you Commandant, and th' General agreed with their selection

Clitheroe When did this happen?

Capt Brennan A fortnight ago

Clitheroe How is it word was never sent to me?

Capt Brennan Word was sent to you I meself brought it

Clitheroe Who did you give it to, then?

Capt Brennan [*after a pause*] I think I gave it to Mrs Clitheroe, there

Clitheroe Nora, d'ye hear that?

[NORA makes no answer]

[*Standing c—there is a note of hardness in his voice*] Nora Captain Brennan says he brought a letter to me from General

Connolly, and that he gave it to you Where is it? What did you do with it?

[CAPT BRENNAN stands in front of the chest of drawers, and softly whistles "The Soldiers' Song"]

Nora [*running over to him, and pleadingly putting her arms around him*] Jack, please Jack, don't go out to-night an' I'll tell you, I'll explain everything Send him away, an' stay with your own little red-lipp'd Nora

Clitheroe [*removing her arms from around him*] None o' this nonsense, now; I want to know what you did with th' letter?

[NORA goes slowly to the couch and sits down again]

[*Angrily*] Why didn't you give me th' letter? What did you do with it? [*Goes over and shakes her by the shoulder*] What did you do with th' letter?

Nora [*flaming up and standing on her feet*] I burned it, I burned it! That's what I did with it! Is General Connolly an' th' Citizen Army goin' to be your only care? Is your home goin' to be only a place to rest in? Am I goin' to be only somethin' to provide merrymakin' at night for you? Your vanity 'll be th' ruin of you an' me yet . . . That's what's movin' you because they've made an officer of you, you'll make a glorious cause of what you're doin', while your little red-lipp'd Nora can go on sittin' here, makin' a companion of th' loneliness of th' night!

Clitheroe [*fiercely*] You burned it, did you? [*He grips her arm*] Well, me good lady—

Nora Let go—you're hurtin' me!

Clitheroe You deserve to be hurt Any letter that comes to me for th' future, take care that I get it . . . D'ye hear—take care that I get it!

[*He lets her go, and she sinks down, crying on the couch He goes to the chest of drawers and takes out a Sam Browne belt, which he puts on, and then puts a revolver in the holster He puts on his hat, and looks towards NORA*]

[*At door L, about to go out*] You needn't wait up for me, if I'm in at all, it won't be before six in th' morning

Nora [*bitterly*] I don't care if you never came back!

*Clitheroe* [to CAPT BRENNAN] Come along, Ned

[*They go out, there is a pause* NORA pulls the new hat from her head and with a bitter movement flings it to the other end of the room. There is a gentle knock at door L, which opens, and MOLLSER comes into the room. She is about 15, but looks to be only about 10, for the ravages of consumption have shrivelled her up. She is pitifully worn, walks feebly, and frequently coughs. She goes over and sits down L of NORA]

Mollser [to NORA] Mother's gone to th' meetin', an' I was feelin' terrible lonely, so I come down to see if you'd let me sit with you, thinkin' you mightn't be goin' yourself

I do be terrible afraid I'll die sometime when I'm be meself. I often envy you, Mrs Clitheroe, seen' th' health you have, an' th' lovely place you have here, an' wondherin' if I'll ever be sthrong enough to be keepin' a home together for a man

[*The faint sound of a band playing is heard in the distance outside in the street*]

Mollser Oh, this must be some more of the Dublin Fusiliers flyin' off to the front

[*The band, passing in the street outside, is now heard loudly playing as they pass the house. It is the music of a brass band playing a regiment to the boat on the way to the front. The tune that is being played is "It's a Long Way to Tipperary", as the band comes to the chorus, the regiment is swinging into the street by NORA's house, and the voices of the soldiers can be heard lustily singing the chorus of the song*]

It's a long way to Tipperary, it's a long way to go,

It's a long way to Tipperary, to th' sweetest girl I know!

Good-bye, Piccadilly, farewell Leicester Square

It's a long way to Tipperary, but my heart's right there!

[NORA and MOLLSER remain silently listening. As the chorus ends, and the music is faint in the distance again, BESSIE BURGESS appears at door L, which MOLLSER has left open]

Bessie [speaking in towards the room] There's th' men marchin' out into th' dhread

dimness o' danger, while th' lice is crawlin' about feedin' on th' fatness o' the land! But yous'll not escape from th' arrow that flieth be night, or th' sickness that wasteth be day. An' ladyship an' all, as some o' them may be, they'll be scattered abroad, like th' dust in th' darkness!

[BESSIE goes away, NORA steals over and quietly shuts the door. She comes back to the lounge and wearily throws herself on it beside MOLLSER]

Mollser [after a pause and a cough] Is there anybody goin', Mrs Clitheroe, with a ttitther o' sense?

## ACT TWO

SCENE—A public-house at the corner of the street in which the meeting is being addressed from Platform No 1. One end of the house is visible to the audience. Part of the counter at the back, L, extending out towards L, occupies one-third of the width of the scene from R to L. On the counter are glasses, beer-pulls, and a carafe filled with water. Behind the counter, on the back wall, are shelves containing bottles of wine, whisky and beer. At back C is a wide, high, plate-glass window. Under the window is a seat to hold three or four persons seated. L are the wide swing-doors. At wall, R, is a seat to hold two persons. A few gaudy-coloured show-cards on the walls.

A band is heard outside playing "The Soldiers' Song," before the CURTAIN rises, and for a few moments afterwards, accompanied by the sounds of marching men.

The BARMAN is seen wiping the part of the counter which is in view. ROSIE REDMOND is standing at the counter toying with what remains of a half of whisky in a wine-glass. She is a sturdy, well-shaped girl of 20, pretty and pert in manner. She is wearing a cream blouse, with an obviously suggestive glad neck, a grey tweed dress, brown stockings and shoes. The blouse and most of the dress are hidden by a black shawl. She has no hat, and in her hair is jauntily set a cheap, glittering, jewelled ornament. It is an hour later.

Barman [wiping counter] Nothin' much doin' in your line to-night, Rosie?

Rosie Curse o' God on th' haporth, hardly, Tom. There isn't much notice taken of a pretty petticoat of a night like



this They're all in a holy mood Th' solemn-lookin' dials on th' whole o' them an' they marchin' to th' meetin' You'd think they were th' glorious company of th' saints, an' th' noble army of martyrs thrampin' through th' sthreeets of Paradise They're all thinkin' of higher things than a girl's garthers. It's a tremendous meetin', four platforms they have—there's one o' them just outside opposite th' window

*Barman* Oh, ay, sure when th' speaker comes [*motioning with his hand*] to th' near end, here, you can see him plain, an' hear nearly everythin' he's spoutin' out of him

*Rosie* It's no joke thryin' to make up fifty-five shillin's a week for your keep an' laundhry, an' then taxin' you a quid for your own room if you bring home a friend for th' night If I could only put by a couple of quid for a swankier outfit, everythin' in th' garden ud look lovely—

*[In the window, back, appears the figure of a tall man, who, standing on a platform, is addressing a crowd outside The figure is almost like a silhouette The BARMAN comes to L end of counter to listen, and ROSIE moves C to see and listen too]*

*Barman* [*to ROSIE*] Whisht, till we hear what he's sayin'

*The Voice of the Man* It is a glorious thing to see arms in the hands of Irishmen We must accustom ourselves to the thought of arms, we must accustom ourselves to the sight of arms, we must accustom ourselves to the use of arms. Bloodshed is a cleansing and sanctifying thing, and the nation that regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood There are many things more horrible than bloodshed, and slavery is one of them!

*[The figure, moving towards L, passes the window, and is lost to sight and hearing The BARMAN goes back to wiping of the counter ROSIE remains looking out of the window]*

*Rosie* It's th' sacred thruth, mind you, what that man's afther sayin'

*Barman* If I was only a little younger, I'd be plungin' mad into th' middle of it!

*Rosie* [*who is still looking out of the window*] Oh, here's th' two gems runnin' over again for their oil!

*[The doors L swing open, and FLUTHER and PETER enter tumultuously They are are hot and hasty with the things they have seen and heard They hurry across to the counter, PETER leading the way ROSIE, after looking at them listlessly for a moment, retires to the seat under the window, sits down, takes a cigarette from her pocket, lights it and smokes]*

*Peter* [*splutteringly to the BARMAN*] Two halves [*To FLUTHER*] A meetin' like this always makes me feel as if I could dhrink Loch Erinn dhry!

*Fluther* You couldn't feel anyway else at a time like this when th' spirit of a man is pulsing to be out fightin' for th' thruth with his feet thremblin' on th' way, maybe to th' gallows, an' his ears tinglin' with th' faint, far-away sound of burstin' rifle-shots that'll maybe whip th' last little shock o' life out of him that's left lingerin' in his body!

*Peter* I felt a burnin' lump in me throat when I heard th' band playin' "The Soldiers' Song," rememberin' last hearin' it marchin' in military formation, with th' people starin' on both sides at us, carryin' with us th' pride an' resolution o' Dublin to th' grave of Wolfe Tone

*Fluther* Get th' Dublin men goin' an' they'll go on full force for anything that's thryin' to bar them away from what they're wantan', where th' shlm thinkin' counthry boyo ud limp away from th' first faintest touch of compromization!

*Peter* [*hurriedly to the BARMAN*] Two more, Tom! [*To FLUTHER*] Th' memory of all th' things that was done, an' all th' things that was suffered be th' people, was boomun' in me brain. . . Every nerve in me body was quiverin' to do somethin' desperate!

*Fluther* Jammed as I was in th' crowd, I listened to th' speeches patherin' on th' people's head, like rain fallin' on th' corn, every derogatory thought went out o' me mind, an' I said to meself, "You can die now, Fluther, for you've seen th' shadow-dreams of th' last leppin' to life in th' bodies of livin' men that show, if we were without a titther o' courage for centuries, we're vice versa now!" Looka here [*He stretches out his arm under PETER's face and rolls up his sleeve*] The blood was boilin' in me veins!

*[The silhouette of the tall figure again moves into the frame of the window, speaking to the people]*

Peter [unaware, in his enthusiasm, of the speaker's appearance, to FLUTHER] I was burnin' to dhraw me sword, an' wave it over me—

Fluther [overwhelming PETER] Will you stop your blatherin' for a minute, man, an' let us hear what he's sayin'!

*[The BARMAN comes to L end of the counter to look at the figure in the window, ROSIE rises from the seat, stands and looks FLUTHER and PETER move towards C to see and listen]*

The Voice of the Man Comrade soldiers of the Irish Volunteers and of the Citizen Army, we rejoice in this terrible war The old heart of the earth needed to be warmed with the red wine of the battlefields . Such august homage was never offered to God as this the homage of millions of lives given gladly for love of country And we must be ready to pour out the same red wine in the same glorious sacrifice, for without shedding of blood there is no redemption!

*[The figure moves out of sight and hearing]*

*[FLUTHER runs back to the counter and gulps down the drink remaining in his glass, PETER does the same, less rapidly, the BARMAN leaves the end of the counter, ROSIE sits on the seat again]*

Fluther [finishing drink, to PETER] Come on, man, this is too good to be missed!

*[FLUTHER rushes across the stage and out by doors L PETER wipes his mouth and hurries after FLUTHER The doors swing open, and the COVEY enters He collides with PETER C PETER stiffens his body, like a cock, and, with a look of hatred on his face, marches stiffly out by doors L The COVEY looks scornfully after PETER, and then crosses to the counter ROSIE sees possibilities in the COVEY, gets up and comes to the counter, a little to the L of the COVEY]*

The Covey [to BARMAN] Give us a glass o' malt, for God's sake, till I stimulate myself from the shock of seeing the sight that's ather goin' out

Rosie [slyly, to the BARMAN] Another

one for me, Tommy, the young gentleman's ordherin' it in the corner of his eye

*[The BARMAN gets a drink for the COVEY, leaves it on the counter, ROSIE whips it up The BARMAN catches ROSIE's arm, and takes glass from her, putting it down beside the COVEY]*

Barman [taking the glass from ROSIE] Eh, houl' on there, houl' on there, Rosie

Rosie [angrily, to the BARMAN] What are you houldin' on out o' you for? Didn't you hear th' young gentleman say that he couldn't refuse anything to a nice little bird? *[To the COVEY]* Isn't that right, Jiggs? *[The COVEY says nothing]* Didn't I know, Tommy, it would be all right? It takes Rosie to size a young man up, an' tell th' thoughts that are thremblin' in his mind Isn't that right, Jiggs?

*[The COVEY stirs uneasily, moves a little farther away, and pulls his cap over his eyes]*

*[Moving after him]* Great meetin' that's gettin' held outside Well, it's up to us all, anyway, to fight for our freedom

The Covey [to the BARMAN] Two more, please *[To ROSIE]* Freedom! What's th' use o' freedom, if it's not economic freedom?

Rosie [emphasizing with extended arm and moving finger] I used them very words just before you come in "A lot o' thricksters," says I, "that wouldn't know what freedom was if they got it from their mother" . *[To the BARMAN]* Didn't I, Tommy?

Barman I disremember

Rosie [to the BARMAN] No, you don't disremember Remember you said, yourself, it was all "only a flash in th' pan" Well, "flash in th' pan, or no flash in th' pan," says I, "they're not goin' to get Rosie Redmond," says I, "to fight for freedom that wouldn't be worth winnin' in a raffle!"

The Covey [contemptuously] There's only one freedom for th' workin' man conthrol o' th' means o' production, rates of exchange an' th' means of distribution *[Tapping ROSIE on the shoulder]* Look here, comrade, I'll leave here to-morrow night for you a copy of Jenersky's *Theses on the Origin, Development an' Consolidation of the Evolutionary Idea of th' Proletariat*

Rosie [throwing off her shawl on to the counter, and showing an exemplified glad neck, which reveals a good deal of a white



*bosom*] If y'ass Rosie, it's heartbreakin' to see a young fella thinkin' of anything, or admirin' anything, but silk thransparent stockin's showin' off the shape of a little lassie's legs!

*[The COVEY is frightened, and moves away from ROSIE along the counter, towards R. ROSIE follows, gliding after him in a seductive way]*

*[Following him]* Out in th' park in th' shade of a warm summery evenin', with your little darlin' bridie to be, kissin' an' cuddlin' *[she tries to put her arm around his neck]*, kissin' an' cuddlin', ay?

*The Covey [frightened]* Ay, what are you doin'? None o' that, now, none o' that I've something else to do besides shinan-nickin' afther Judies!

*[The COVEY turns to L and moves slowly to L, away from ROSIE, she turns with him, keeping him facing her, holding his arm. They move this way to c]*

*Rosie* Oh, little ducky, oh, shy little ducky! Never held a mot's hand, an' wouldn't know how to tittle a little Judy! *[She clips him under the chin]* Tittle him undher th' chin, tittle him undher th' chin!

*The Covey [breaking away and running out by doors L]* Aye, go on, now, I don't want to have any meddlin' with a lassie like you!

*Rosie [enraged—returning to the seat at the window]* Jasus, it's in a monastery some of us ought to be, spendin' our holidays kneelin' on our adorers, tellin' our beads an' knockin' hell out of our buzzums!

*[The voice of the COVEY is heard outside doors L calling in a scale of notes, "Cuckoo-ooooo" Then the swing-doors open, and PETER and FLUTHER, followed by MRS GOGAN, come in. MRS GOGAN carries a baby in her arms]*

*Peter [in plaintive anger, looking towards the door L]* It's terrible that young Covey can't let me pass without proddin' at me! Did you hear him murmurin' "cuckoo" when he were passin'?

*Fluther [irritably—to PETER]* I wouldn't be everlastin' cockin' me ear to hear every little whisper that was floatin' around about me! It's my rule never to lose me temper till it would be dethrimental to keep it. There's nothin' derogatory in th' use o' th' word "cuckoo," is there?

*[MRS GOGAN, followed by PETER, go up to the seat under the window and sit down, PETER to the R of MRS GOGAN. ROSIE, after a look at those who've come in, goes out by doors L]*

*Peter [tearfully]* It's not the word, it's the way he says it! He never says it straight out, but murmurs it with curious quiverin' ripples, like variations on a flute.

*Fluther [standing in front of the seat]* A' what odds if he gave it with variations on a thrombone? *[To MRS GOGAN]* What's yours goin' to be, maam?

*Mrs Gogan* Ah, half a malt, Fluther.

*[FLUTHER goes from the seat over to the counter]*

*Fluther [to the BARMAN]* Three halves, Tommy.

*[The BARMAN gets the drinks, leaves them on the counter. FLUTHER pays the BARMAN, takes drinks to the seat under the window, gives one to MRS GOGAN, one to PETER, and keeps the thrd for himself. He then sits on the seat to the L of MRS GOGAN]*

*Mrs Gogan [drinking, and looking admiringly at PETER's costume]* The Forest-hers' is a gorgeous dhress! I don't think I've seen nicer, mind you, in a pantomime.

Th' lovehest part of th' dhress, I think, is th' osthritchess plume. When yous are goin' along, an' I see them wavin' an' noddin' an' waggin', I seem to be lookin' at each of yous hangin' at th' end of a rope, your eyes bulgin' an' your legs twistin' an' jerkin', gaspin' an' gaspin' for breath while yous are thryin' to die for Ireland!

*Fluther [scornfully]* If any o' them is ever hangin' at the end of a rope, it won't be for Ireland!

*Peter.* Are you goin' to start th' young Covey's game o' proddin' an' twartin' a man? There's not many that's talkin' can say that for twenty-five years he never missed a pilgrimage to Bodenstown!

*Fluther [looking angrily at PETER]* You're always blowin' about goin' to Bodenstown. D'ye think no one but yourself ever went to Bodenstown? *[FLUTHER emphasizes the word "Bodenstown"]*

*Peter [plaintively]* I'm not blowin' about it, but there's not a year that I go there but I pluck a leaf off Tone's grave, an' this very day me prayer-book is nearly full of them.

*Fluther [scornfully]* Then Fluther has a

vice-versa opinion of them that put ivy leaves into their prayer-books, scabbin' it on th' clergy, an' thyrin' to out-do th' haloes o' th' saints be lookin' as if he was wearin' around his head a glittherin' aroree boree allis! [*Fiercely*] Sure, I don't care a damn if you slep' in *Bodenstown*! You can take your breakfast, dinner an' tea on th' grave, in *Bodenstown*, if you like, for *Fluther*!

*Mrs Gogan* Oh, don't start a fight, boys, for God's sake, I was only sayin' what a nice costume it is—nicer than th' kilts, for, God forgive me, I always think th' kilts is hardly decent

*Fluther* [*laughing scornfully*] Ah, sure, when you'd look at him, you'd wondher whether th' man was makin' fun o' th' costume, or th' costume was makin' fun o' th' man!

*Barman* [*over to them*] Now, then, thry to speak asy, will yous? We don't want no shoutin' here

*[The swing-doors open and the COVEY, followed by BESSIE BURGESS, come in. They go over and stand at the counter. Passing, BESSIE gives a scornful look at those seated near the window. BESSIE and the COVEY talk together, but frequently eye the group at the window.]*  
*Covey* [*to the BARMAN*] Two glasses o' malt

*[The BARMAN gets the drinks, leaves them on the counter. The COVEY puts one beside BESSIE and keeps the other. He pays the BARMAN.]*

*Peter* [*plaintively*] There he is now—I knew he wouldn't be long till he folleyed me in

*Bessie* [*speaking to the COVEY, but really at the other party*] I can't for th' life o' me undherstand how they can call themselves Catholics, when they won't lift a finger to help poor little Catholic Belgium

*Mrs Gogan* [*raising her voice*] What about poor little Catholic Ireland?

*Bessie* [*over to Mrs GOGAN*] You mind your own business, maam, an' stupify your foolishness be gettin' dhrunk

*Peter* [*anxiously—to Mrs GOGAN*] Take no notice of her, pay no attention to her. She's just tormentin' herself towards havin' a row with somebody

*Bessie* [*in quiet anger*] There's a storm of anger tossin' in me heart, thinkin' of all th' poor Tommies, an' with them me own son, dhrrenched in water an' soaked in blood,

gropin' their way to a shattherin' death, in a shower o' shells! Young men with th' sunny lust o' life beamin' in them, layin' down their white bodies, shredded into torn an' bloody pieces, on th' althar that God Himself has built for th' sacrifice of heroes!

*Mrs Gogan* [*indignantly*] Isn't it a nice thing to have to be listenin' to a lassie an' hangin' our heads in a dead silence, knowin' that some persons think more of a ball of malt than they do of th' blessed saints

*Fluther* [*deprecatingly*] Whisht, she's always dangerous an' derogatory when she's well oiled. Th' safest way to hindher her from havin' any enjoyment out of her spite, is to dip our thoughts into the fact of her bein' a female person that has moved out of th' sight of ordinary sensible people

*Bessie* [*over to Mrs GOGAN, viciously*] To look at some o' th' women that's knockin' about, now, is a thing to make a body sigh. A woman on her own, dhrinkin' with a bevy o' men is hardly an example to her sex. A woman dhrinkin' with a woman is one thing, an' a woman dhrinkin' with herself is still a woman—flappers may be put in another category altogether—but a middle-aged married woman makin' herself th' centre of a circle of men is as a woman that is loud an' stubborn, whose feet abideth not in her own house

*The Covey* [*to BESSIE—with a scornful look at PETER*] When I think of all th' problems in front o' th' workers, it makes me sick to be lookin' at oul' codgers goin' about dhressed up like green-accoutered figures gone astray out of a toyshop!

*Peter* [*angrily*] Gracious God, give me patience to be listenin' to that blasted young Covey proddin' at me from over at th' other end of th' shop!

*Mrs Gogan* [*dipping her finger in the whisky, and moistening with it the lips of her baby*] Cissie Gogan's a woman livin' for nigh on twenty-five years in her own room, an' beyond biddin' th' time o' day to her neighbours, never yet as much as nodded her head in th' direction of other people's business, while she knows some [*with a look at BESSIE*] as are never content unless they're standin' senthry over other people's doin's!

*[Again the figure appears, like a silhouette, in the window, back, and all hear the voice of the speaker declaim—*

*ing passionately to the gathering outside* FLUTHER, PETER and MRS GOGAN stand up, turn, and look towards the window The BARMAN comes to the end of the counter, BESSIE and the COVEY stop talking, and look towards the window]

*The Voice of the Speaker* The last sixteen months have been the most glorious in the history of Europe Heroism has come back to the earth War is a terrible thing, but war is not an evil thing People in Ireland dread war because they do not know it Ireland has not known the exhilaration of war for over a hundred years When war comes to Ireland she must welcome it as she would welcome the Angel of God!

[*The figure passes out of sight and hearing, L*]

*The Covey [towards all present]* Dope, dope There's only one war worth havin' th' war for th' economic emancipation of th' proletariat

*Bessie [referring to MRS GOGAN]* They may crow away out o' them, but it ud be fittier for some o' them to mend their ways, an' cease from havin' scouts out watchin' for th' comin' of th' Saint Vincent de Paul man, for fear they'd be nailed lowerin' a pint of beer, mockin' th' man with an angel face, shinin' with th' glamour of deceit an' lies!

*Mrs Gogan [over to BESSIE]* An' a certain lassie standin' stiff behind her own door with her ears cocked listenin' to what's being said, stuffed till she's sthained with envy of a neighbour thryin' for a few little things that may be got be hard sthivin' to keep up to th' letther an' th' law, an' th' practices of th' Church!

*Peter [to MRS GOGAN].* If I was you, Mrs Gogan, I'd parry her jabbin' remarks be a powerful silence that'll keep her tantalizin' words from penetratin' into your feelin's It's always betther to leave these people to th' vengeance o' God!

*Bessie [at the counter]* Bessie Burgess doesn't put up to know much, never havin' a swaggerin' mind, thanks be to God, but goin' on packin' up knowledge accordin' to her conscience precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, an' there a little

[*BESSIE, with a vigorous swing of her shawl, turns, and with a quick movement goes c, facing MRS GOGAN*]

[*Furiously*] But, thanks be to Christ, she knows when she was got, where she was got, an' how she was got, while there's some she knows, decoratin' their finger with a well-polished weddin' ring, would be hard put to it if they were assed to show their weddin' lines!

[*MRS GOGAN springs up from the seat and bounces to c, facing BESSIE BURGESS* *MRS GOGAN is wild with anger*]

*Mrs Gogan [with hysterical rage]* Y' oul' rip of a blasted liar, me weddin' ring's been well earned be twenty years be th' side o' me husband, now takin' his rest in heaven, married to me be Father Dempsey, in th' Chapel o' Saint Jude's, in th' Christmas Week of eighteen hundhred an' ninety-five; an' any kid, livin' or dead, that Jinnie Gogan's had since, was got between th' bordhers of th' Ten Commandments!

*Bessie [bringing the palms of her hands together in sharp claps to emphasize her remarks]* Liar to you, too, maam, y' oul' hardened thresspasser on other people's good nature, wizenin' up your soul in th' arts o' dodgeries, till every dhrop of respectability in a female is dhried up in her, lookin' at your ready-made manœuverin' with th' menkind!

*Barman [anxiously leaning over the counter]* Here, there, here, there, speak asy there No rowin' here, no rowin' here, now

[*FLUTHER comes from the seat, gets in front of MRS GOGAN, and tries to pacify her, PETER leaves the seat, and tries to do the same with BESSIE, holding her back from MRS GOGAN* The positions are BARMAN behind the counter, leaning forward, BESSIE R, next PETER, next FLUTHER, next MRS GOGAN, with baby in her arms The COVEY remains leaning on the counter, looking on]

*Fluther [trying to calm MRS GOGAN]* Now, Jinnie, Jinnie, it's a derogatory thing to be smirchin' a night like this with a row, it's rompin' with th' feelin's of hope we ought to be, instead o' bein' vice versa!

*Peter [trying to quiet BESSIE]* I'm terrible dawny, Mrs Burgess, an' a fight leaves me weak for a long time afterwards . Please, Mrs Burgess, before there's damage done, thry to have a little respect for yourself

*Bessie [with a push of her hand that sends PETER tottering to the end of the counter]*

G'way, you little sermonizing, little yella-faced, little consequential, little pudgy, little bum, you!

Mrs Gogan [*screaming and struggling*] Fluther, leggo! I'm not goin' to keep an unresistan' silence, an' her scatherin' her festerin' words in me face, stirrin' up every dhop of decency in a respectable female, with her restless rally o' lies that would make a saint say his prayer backwards!

Bessie [*shouting*] Ah, everybody knows well that th' best charity that can be shown to you is to hide th' thruth as much as our thrue worship of God Almighty will allow us!

Mrs Gogan [*frantically*] Here, houl' th' kid, one o' yours, houl' th' kid for a minute! There's nothin' for it but to show this lassie a lesson or two [To PETER] Here, houl' th' kid, you

[MRS GOGAN suddenly rushes over to PETER, standing, trembling with fear, between the end of the counter and the seat under the window Bewildered, and before he's aware of it, Mrs GOGAN has put the baby in his arms MRS GOGAN rushes back c and puts herself in a fighting attitude in front of BESSIE]

[To BESSIE, standing before her in a fighting attitude] Come on, now, me loyal lassie, dyin' with grief for little Catholic Belgium! When Jinnie Gogan's done with you, you'll have a little leisure lyin' down to think an' pray for your king an' counthry!

Barman [*coming from behind the counter, getting between the women, and proceeding to push BESSIE towards the door*] Here, now, since yous can't have a little friendly argument quietly, yous'll get out o' this place in quick time Go on, an' settle your differences somewhere else—I don't want to have another endorsement on me licence

[The BARMAN pushes BESSIE towards the doors L, Mrs GOGAN following]

Peter [*anxiously calling to Mrs GOGAN*] Here, take your kid back ower this How nicely I was picked now for it to be plumped into my arms!

The Covey [*meaningly*] She knew who she was givin' it to, maybe

[PETER goes over near to the COVEY at the counter to retort indignantly, as the BARMAN pushes BESSIE out of the doors L and gets hold of Mrs GOGAN to put her out too]

Peter [*hotly to the COVEY*] Now, I'm givin' you fair warnin', me young Covey, to quit firn' your jibes an' jeers at me For one o' these days, I'll run out in front o' God Almighty an' take your sacred life!

Barman [*pushing Mrs GOGAN out after BESSIE*] Go on, now, out you go

Peter [*leaving the baby down on the floor c*] Ay, be Jasus, wait there, till I give her back her youngster!

[PETER runs to the door L, opens it, and calls out after Mrs GOGAN]

Peter [*calling at the door L*] Eh, there, eh! What about the kid? [He runs back in, c, and looks at FLUTHER and the COVEY] There, she's afther goin' without her kid—what are we goin' to do with it now?

The Covey [*jeering*] What are you goin' to do with it? Bring it outside an' show everybody what you're afther findin'

Peter [*in a panic—to FLUTHER*] Pick it up, you, Fluther, an' run afther her with it, will you?

Fluther [*with a long look at PETER*] What d'ye take Fluther for? You must think Fluther's a right gom D'ye think Fluther's like yourself, destitute of a titther of undherstandin'?

Barman [*imperatively to PETER*] Take it up, man, an' run out afther her with it, before she's gone too far You're not goin' to leave th' bloody thing there, are you?

Peter [*plaintively, as he lifts up the baby*] Well, God Almighty, give me patience with all th' scornors, tormentors, an' twarters that are always an' ever thryin' to goad me into prayin' for their blindin' an' blastin' an' burnin' in th' world to come!

[PETER, with the baby, goes out of the door L FLUTHER comes from the front of the window to the counter and stands there, beside the COVEY]

Fluther [*with an air of relief*] God, it's a relief to get rid o' that crowd Women is terrible when they start to fight There's no holdin' them back [To the COVEY] Are you goin' to have anything?

The Covey Ah, I don't mind if I have another half

Fluther [*to the BARMAN*] Two more Tommy, me son

[The BARMAN gets the drinks, FLUTHER pays]

Fluther [*to the COVEY*] You know there's no conthrollin' a woman when she loses her head

[ROSIE appears at the doors L She looks over at the counter, sees the two men, then crosses over to the L end of the counter, where she stands, with a suggestive look towards FLUTHER]

Rosie [to the BARMAN] Divil a use o' havin' a thrim little leg on a night like this, things was never worse. Give us a half till to-morrow, Tom, duckey

Barman [coldly] No more to-night, Rosie, you owe me for three already

Rosie [combatively] You'll be paid, won't you?

Barman I hope so

Rosie You hope so! Is that th' way with you, now?

Fluther [with a long glance at ROSIE, to the BARMAN]. Give her one—it'll be all right

[The BARMAN gets a drink, and puts it on the counter before ROSIE, FLUTHER pays for it]

Rosie [clapping FLUTHER on the back] Oul' sport!

Fluther [to COVEY] Th' meetin' should be soon over, now

The Covey [in a superior way]. Th' sooner th' betther It's alla lot o' blasted nonsense, comrade

Fluther Oh, I wouldn't say it was all nonsense After all, Fluther can remember th' time, an' him only a dawny chiselur, bein' taught at his mother's knee to be faithful to th' Shan Vok Vok!

The Covey That's all dope, comrade, th' sort o' thing that workers are fed on be th' Boorzawzee

Fluther [a little sharply] What's all dope? Though I'm sayin' it that shouldn't [catching his cheek with his hand, and pulling down the flesh from the eye] d'ye see that mark there, undher me eye? . . . A sabre slice from a dragoon in O'Connell Street! [Thrusting his head forward towards ROSIE] Feel that dint in th' middle o' me nut!

Rosie [rubbing FLUTHER'S head, and winking at the COVEY] My God, there's a holla!

Fluther [putting on his hat with quiet pride] A skelp from a bobby's baton at a Labour meetin' in th' Phoenix Park!

The Covey [sarcastically] He must ha' hitten you in mistake I don't know what you ever done for th' Labour movement

Fluther [loudly] D'ye not? Maybe, then, I done as much, an' know as much

about th' Labour movement as th' chancers that are blowin' about it!

Barman [over the counter]. Speak easy, Fluther, thry to speak easy

The Covey [quietly] There's no necessity to get excited about it, comrade

Fluther [more loudly]. Excited? Who's gettin' excited? There's no one gettin' excited! It would take something more than a thing like you to flutther a feather o' Fluther Blatherin', an', when all is said, you know as much as th' rest in th' wind up!

The Covey [emphatically] Well, let us put it to th' test, then, an' see what you know about th' Labour movement what's the mechanism of exchange?

Fluther [roaring, because he feels he is beaten] How th' hell do I know what it is? There's nothin' about that in th' rules of our Thrades Union!

Barman [protestingly] For God's sake, thry to speak easy, Fluther

The Covey What does Karl Marx say about th' Relation of Value to th' Cost o' Production?

Fluther [angrily]. What th' hell do I care what he says? I'm Irishman enough not to lose me head be follyin' foreigners!

Barman Speak easy, Fluther.

The Covey [contemptuously]. It's only waste o' time talkin' to you, comrade

Fluther. Don't be comradin' me, mate I'd be on me last legs if I wanted you for a comrade

Rosie [to the COVEY, taking FLUTHER'S part] It seems a highly ridiculous thing to hear a thing that's only an inch or two away from a kid, swingin' heavy words about he doesn't know th' meanin' of, an' uppishly thryin' to down a man like Misther Fluther here, that's well flavoured in th' knowledge of th' world he's livin' in

The Covey [bending over the counter—savagely to ROSIE] Nobody's askin' you to be buttin' in with your prate I have you well taped, me lassie Just you keep your opinions for your own place . . . It'll be a long time before th' Covey takes any instructions or reprimandin' from a prostitute!

[ROSIE, wild with humiliation, bounds from the end of the counter to C and with eyes blazing, faces towards the COVEY]

*Rosie* You louse, you louse, you! .  
 You're no man . You're no man .  
 I'm a woman, anyhow, an' if I'm a prostitute aself, I have me feeln's . Thryin' to put his arm around me a minute ago, an' givin' me th' glad eye, th' little wrigglin' lump o' desolation turns on me now, because he saw there was nothin' doin' . You louse, you! If I was a man, or you were a woman, I'd bate th' puss o' you!

*Barman* Ay, Rosie, ay! You'll have to shut your mouth altogether, if you can't learn to speak easy!

[*FLUTHER, with a dignified walk, goes over to ROSIE c and puts a hand on her shoulder*]

*Fluther* [*to ROSIE*] Hou! on there, Rosie, hou! on there There's no necessity to fluther yourself when you're with Fluther . Any lady that's in th' company of Fluther is goin' to get a fair hunt This is outside your province I'm not goin' to let you demean yourself be talkin' to a titherin' chancer . Leave this to Fluther—this is a man's job . . [*He turns from ROSIE, comes back, crosses the COVEY, then turns and faces him To the COVEY*] Now, if you've anything to say, say it to Fluther, an' let me tell you, you're not goin' to be pass-remarkable to any lady in my company

*The Covey* Sure I don't care if you were runnin' all night afther your Mary o' th' Curlin' Hair, but, when you start tellin' luscious lies about what you done for th' Labour movement, it's nearly time to show y'up!

*Fluther* [*fiercely*] Is it you show Fluther up? G'way, man, I'd beat two o' you before me breakfast!

*The Covey* [*contemptuously*] Tell us where you bury your dead, will you?

*Fluther* [*with his face stuck into the face of the COVEY*] Sing a little less on th' high note, or, when I'm done with you, you'll put a Christianable construction on things, I'm tellin' you!

*The Covey* You're a big fella, you are

*Fluther* [*tapping the COVEY threateningly on the shoulder*] Now, you're temptin' Providence when you're temptin' Fluther!

*The Covey* [*losing his temper, knocking FLUTHER's hands away, and bawling*] Easy with them hands, there, easy with them hands! You're startin' to take a little risk when you commence to paw the Covey!

[*FLUTHER suddenly springs into the c of the shop, flings his hat into the corner, whips off his coat, and begins to paw the air like a pugilist*]

*Fluther* [*roaring*] Come on, come on, you lowser, put your mitts up now, if there's a man's blood in you! Be God, in a few minutes you'll see some snots flyin' around, I'm tellin' you . When Fluther's done with you, you'll have a vice-versa opinion of him! Come on, now, come on!

[*The COVEY squares up to FLUTHER*]

*Barman* [*running from behind the counter and catching hold of the COVEY*] Here, out you go, me little bowsey Because you got a couple o' halves you think you can act as you like [*He pushes the COVEY to the doors L*] Fluther's a friend o' mine, an' I'll not have him insulted

*The Covey* [*struggling with the BARMAN*] Ay, leggo, leggo there, fair hunt, give a man a fair hunt! One minute with him is all I ask, one minute alone with him, while you're runnin' for th' priest an' th' doctor!

*Fluther* [*to the BARMAN*] Let him go, let him go, Tom let him open th' door to sudden death if he wants to!

*Barman* [*grappling with the COVEY*] Go on, out you go an' do th' bowsey somewhere else

[*The BARMAN pushes the COVEY out by doors L, and goes back behind the counter FLUTHER assumes a proud air of victory ROSIE gets his coat, and helps him to put it on, she then gets his hat and puts it on his head*]

*Rosie* [*helping FLUTHER with his coat*] . Be God, you put th' fear o' God in his heart that time! I thought you'd have to be dug out of him . Th' way you lepped out without any of your fancy side-steppin'! "Men like Fluther," says I to meself, "is gettin' scarce nowadays"

*Fluther* [*with proud complacency, c*] I wasn't goin' to let meself be malignified by a chancer He got a little bit too derogatory for Fluther . Be God, to think of a cur like that comin' to talk to a man like me!

*Rosie* [*fixing on his hat*] Did j'ever!

*Fluther* He's lucky he got off safe I hit a man last week, Rosie, an' he's fallin' yet!

*Rosie* Sure, you'd ha' broken him in two if you'd ha' hitten him one clatter!

*Fluther* [*amorously, putting his arm around ROSIE*] Come on into th' snug, me



little darlin', an' we'll have a few dhrinks before I see you home

*Rosie* Oh, Fluther, I'm afraid you're a terrible man for th' women

[*FLUTHER leads ROSIE to the seat with the round table in front, R She sits down on the seat. He goes to the counter*]

*Fluther* [*to the BARMAN*] Two, full ones, Tommy

[*BARMAN gets the drinks FLUTHER brings them over to seat R, leaves them on the table, and sits down beside ROSIE The swing-doors L open and CAPTAIN BRENNAN, COMMANDANT CLITHEROE, and LIEUTENANT LANGON enter, and cross quickly to the counter CAPT BRENNAN carries the banner of The Plough and the Stars, and LIEUT LANGON a green, white and orange Tri-colour They are in a state of emotional excitement Their faces are flushed and their eyes sparkle, they speak rapidly, as if unaware of the meaning of what they say They have been mesmerized by the fervency of the speeches*]

*Clitheroe* [*almost pantingly to the BARMAN*] Three glasses o' port!

[*The BARMAN brings the drinks, CLITHEROE pays*]

*Capt Brennan* We won't have long to wait now

*Lieut Langon* Th' time is rotten ripe for revolution

*Clitheroe* [*to LIEUT LANGON*]. You have a mother, Langon

*Lieut Langon*. Ireland is greater than a mother

*Capt Brennan* [*to CLITHEROE*] You have a wife, Clitheroe

*Clitheroe* Ireland is greater than a wife

*Lieut Langon* Th' time for Ireland's battle is now—th' place for Ireland's battle is here

[*The tall, dark figure again appears in the window The three men stiffen to attention They stand out from the L of the counter, BRENNAN nearest counter, then CLITHEROE, then LIEUT LANGON FLUTHER and ROSIE, busy with each other, take no notice*]

*The Voice of the Man* Our foes are strong, but strong as they are, they cannot undo the miracles of God, who ripens in the heart of young men the seeds sown by the

young men of a former generation They think they have pacified Ireland, think they have foreseen everything; think they have provided against everything, but the fools, the fools, the fools!—they have left us our Fenian dead, and, while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland, unfree, shall never be at peace!

*Capt Brennan* [*lifting up the Plough and the Stars*] Imprisonment for th' Independence of Ireland!

*Lieut Langon* [*lifting up the Tri-colour*] Wounds for th' Independence of Ireland!

*Clitheroe* Death for th' Independence of Ireland!

*The Three* [*together*] So help us God!

[*They lift their glasses and drink together The "Assembly" is heard on a bugle outside They leave their glasses on the counter, and hurry out by doors L A pause Then FLUTHER and ROSIE rise from the seat, and start to go L ROSIE is linking FLUTHER, who is a little drunk Both are in a merry mood*]

*Rosie* Are you afraid or what? Are you goin' to come home, or are you not?

*Fluther* Of course I'm goin' home What ud ail me that I wouldn't go?

*Rosie* [*lovingly*]. Come on, then, oul' sport

*Officer's Voice* [*giving command outside*] Irish Volunteers, by th' right, quick march!

*Rosie* [*putting her arm round FLUTHER and singing to the air "Twenty-four Strings to My Bow"*]

I once had a lover, a tailor, but he could do nothin' for me,

An' then I fell in with a sailor as strong an' as wild as th' sea

We cuddled an' kissed with devotion, till th' night from th' mornin' had fled,

An' there, to our joy, a bright bouncin' boy Was dancin' a jig in th' bed!

Dancin' a jig in th' bed, an' bawlin' for b itther an' bread

An' there, to our joy, a bright bouncin' boy Was dancin' a jig in th' bed!

[*They go out with their arms round each other*]

*Clitheroe's Voice* [*in command outside*] Dublin Battalion of the Irish Citizen Army, by th' right, quick march!

## ACT THREE

SCENE—A corner house of a street of tenements, exterior of house in which the Clitheroes live. It is a tall, gaunt five-storey tenement. Its brick front is dull from weather and age. It juts out from L more than half-way across stage, showing part of the front elevation, with wide, heavy door, having windows above and on both sides. The windows on L, looking into the rooms of the Clitheroes, are hung with good casement cloth. The others are draped with grimy lace curtains. Stone steps lead from the door to the path on the street. From these steps, on each side of the door are railings to prevent anyone from falling down the area. To the extreme R the front of another house is merely indicated by the side aspect of a wall with steps leading from the door, on which the wounded LANGON rests later on in the scene. Between the two runs a lane which, upstage, turns to the R. At the corner of the lane, nearest the house shown almost full front, is a street lamp.

As the house is revealed, MRS GOGAN is seen helping MOLLSER to a chair, which stands on the path beside the railings, at the L side of the steps. She then wraps a shawl around MOLLSER'S shoulders. It is some months later.

Mrs Gogan [arranging shawl around MOLLSER] Th' sun'll do you all th' good in th' world. A few more weeks o' this weather, an' there's no knowin' how well you'll be. Are you comfy, now?

Mollser [weakly and wearily] Yis, ma, I'm all right.

Mrs Gogan [bending over her] How are you feeln'?

Mollser Betther, ma, betther. If th' horrible sinkin' feeln' ud go, I'd be all right.

Mrs Gogan Ah, I wouldn't put much pass on that. Your stomach maybe's out of order. Is th' poor breathin' any betther, d'ye think?

Mollser Yis, yis, ma, a lot betther.

Mrs Gogan Well, that's somethin' anyhow. With th' help o' God, you'll be on th' mend from this out. D'your legs feel any sthronger undher you, d'ye think?

Mollser [irritably] I can't tell, ma. I think so. A little.

Mrs Gogan Well, a little aself is somethin'. I thought I heard you coughin'

a little more than usual last night. D'ye think you were?

Mollser I wasn't, ma, I wasn't.

Mrs Gogan I thought I heard you, for I was kep' awake all night with th' shootin'. An' thinkin' o' that madman, Fluther, runnin' about through th' night lookin' for Nora Clitheroe to bring her back when he heard she'd gone to folly her husband, an' in dhread any minute he might come staggerin' in covered with bandages, splashed all over with th' red of his own blood, an' givin' us barely time to bring th' priest to hear th' last whisper of his final confession, as his soul was passin' through th' dark doorway o' death into th' way o' th' wondherin' dead.

You don't feel cold, do you?

Mollser No, ma, I'm all right.

Mrs Gogan Keep your chest well covered, for that's th' delicate spot in you. If there's any danger, I'll whip you in again.

[MRS GOGAN crosses to R, goes up the lane, turns and looks R, as if looking down the street.]

Oh, here's the Covey an' oul' Peter hurryin' along. [She comes down the lane, and crosses to MOLLSER] God Almighty, sthrange things is happenin' when them two is pulln' together.

[The COVEY and PETER come into the lane R, come down, and stand R. C. MRS GOGAN stands C, near the steps. The two men are breathless and excited.]

[To the two men] Were yous far up th' town? Did yous see any sign o' Fluther or Nora? How is things lookin'? I hear they're blazin' away out o' th' G.P.O. That th' Tommies is sthretched in heaps around Nelson's Pillar an' th' Parnell Statue, an' that th' pavin' sets in O'Connell Street is nearly covered be pools o' blood.

Peter We seen no sign o' Nora or Fluther anywhere.

Mrs Gogan We should ha' held her back be main force from goin' to look for her husband. God knows what's happened to her—I'm always seemin' her sthretched on her back in some hospital, moanin' with th' pain of a bullet in her vitals, an' nuns thryin' to get her to take a last look at th' crucifix!

The Covey We can do nothin'. You can't stick your nose into O'Connell Street, an' Tyler's is on fire.

Peter An' we seen th' Lancers—



*The Covey* [interrupting] Throttin' along, heads in th' air, spurs an' sabres jinglin', an' lances quiverin', an' lookin' as if they were assin' themselves, "Where's these blighters, till we get a prod at them," when there was a volley from th' Post Office that stretched half o' them, an' sent th' rest gallopin' away wondherin' how far they'd have to go before they'd feel safe

*Peter* [rubbing his hands] "Damn it," says I to meself, "this looks like business!"

*The Covey* An' then out comes General Pearse an' his staff, an', standin' in th' middle o' th' street, he reads th' Proclamation

*Mrs Gogan* What proclamation?

*Peter* Declarin' an Irish Republic

*Mrs Gogan* [with amazement] Go to God!

*Peter* The gunboat *Helga's* shellin' Liberty Hall, an' I hear that people livin' on th' quays had to crawl on their bellies to Mass with th' bullets that were flyin' around from Boland's Mills

*Mrs Gogan* God bless us, what's goin' to be th' end of it all!

*Bessie* [opening and looking out of a window] Maybe yous are satisfied now, maybe yous are satisfied now! Go on an' get guns if yous are men—Johnny get your gun, get your gun, get your gun! Yous are all nicely shanghaied now, th' boyo hasn't a sword on his thigh, now! Oh, yous are all nicely shanghaied now! [She shuts down the window viciously]

*Mrs Gogan* [warningly to PETER and the COVEY] S-s-sh, don't answer her She's th' right oul' Orange bitch! She's been chantin' "Rule, Britannia" all th' mornin'

*Peter* I hope Fluther hasn't met with any accident, he's such a wild card

*The Covey* Fluther's well able to take care of himself

*Mrs Gogan* [dolefully] God grant it, but last night I dreamt I seen gettin' carried into th' house a sthretcher with a figure lyin' on it, stiff an' still, dhressed in th' habit of Saint Francis An' then, I heard th' murmurs of a crowd no one could see sayin' th' litany for th' dead, an' then it got so dark that nothin' was seen but th' white face of th' corpse, gleamin' like a white wather lily floatin' on th' top of a dark lake Then a tiny whisper thrickled into me ear, sayin', "Isn't the face very like th' face o' Fluther," an' then, with a thremblin' flutther, th' dead lips opened, an', although I couldn't

hear, I knew they were sayin', "Poor oul' Fluther, afther havin' handin' in his gun at last, his shakin' soul moored in th' place where th' wicked are at rest an' th' weary cease from throublin'."

[While MRS GOGAN is speaking, PETER wanders up the lane, looks R, then stares, then puts on spectacles and looks again He turns and shouts at MRS GOGAN and the COVEY]

*Peter* [shouting] Here they are, be God, here they are, just afther turnin' the corner—Nora an' Fluther!

[The COVEY runs up the lane and looks R with PETER]

*Covey* She must be wounded or something—Fluther seems to be carryin' her.

[FLUTHER, half carrying NORA, comes in R; NORA's eyes are dim and hollow, her face pale and strained-looking, her hair is tossed and her clothes are dusty They pass by COVEY and PETER, come down the lane, and cross over to the door of the house C. PETER and the COVEY follow, and stand R MRS GOGAN goes over solicitously to NORA NORA wears a brown mackintosh]

*Mrs Gogan* [running over to them] God bless us, is it wounded y'are, Mrs Chtheroe, or what?

*Fluther* [confidently] Ah, she's all right, Mrs Gogan, only worn out from thravellin' an' want o' sleep A night's rest, now, an' she'll be as fit as a fiddle Bring her in, an' make her lie down

*Mrs Gogan* [to NORA] Did you hear e'er a whisper o' Mr Chtheroe?

*Nora* [wearily]. I could find him nowhere, Mrs Gogan None o' them would tell me where he was They told me I shamed my husband an' th' women of Ireland be carryin' on as I was . They said th' women must learn to be brave an' cease to be cowardly Me who risked more for love than they would risk for hate [Raising her voice in hysterical protest] My Jack will be killed, my Jack will be killed! . He is to be butchered as a sacrifice to th' dead!

[NORA sinks down on the steps at the door BESSIE BURGESS opens the window, and shouts at them They do not look at her]

*Bessie* Yous are all nicely shanghaied now! Sorra mend the lassies who have been kissin' an' cuddlin' their boys into th'

sheddin' of blood Fillin' their minds with fairy tales that had no beginnin', but, please God, 'll have a bloody quick endin'! [She shuts the window with a bang]

Fluther [losing control] Y' ignorant oul' throllope you!

Mrs Gogan [coaxingly, to NORA] You'll find he'll come home safe enough to you, Mrs Clitheroe. Afther all, there's a power o' women that's handed over sons an' husbands, to take a runnin' risk in th' fight they're wagin'.

Nora I can't help thinkin' every shot fired 'll be fired at Jack, an' every shot fired at Jack 'll be fired at me. What do I care for th' others? I can think only of me own self. An' there's no woman gives a son or a husband to be killed—if they say it they're lyin', lyin', against God Nature, an' against themselves! One blasted hussy at a barricade told me to go home an' not be thyrin' to dishearten th' men.

Peter [unctuously] You'll have to have patience, Nora. We all have to put up with twarthers an' tormentors in this world.

The Covey If they were fightin' for anythin' worth while, I wouldn't mind.

Fluther [to NORA] Nothin' derogatory 'll happen to Mr Clitheroe. You'll find, now, in th' finish up, it'll be vice versa.

Nora Oh, I know that wherever he is, he's thinkin' of wantin' to be with me. I know he's longin' to be passin' his hand through me hair, to be caressin' me neck, to fondle me hand an' to feel me kisses clingin' to his mouth. An' he stands wherever he is because he's brave? [Vehemently] No, but because he's a coward, a coward, a coward!

Mrs Gogan Oh, they're not cowards anyway.

Nora [with denunciatory anger] I tell you they're afraid to say they're afraid!

Oh, I saw it, I saw it, Mrs Gogan. At th' barricade in North King Street I saw fear glowin' in all their eyes. An' in th' middle o' th' sthreet was somethin' huddled up in a horrible tangled heap. An' I saw that they were afraid to look at it. I tell you they were afraid, afraid, afraid!

Mrs Gogan [lifting her up from the steps] Come on in, dear. If you'd been a little longer together the wrench asunder wouldn't have been so sharp.

Nora [painfully ascending the steps, helped by Mrs GOGAN] Th' agony I'm in

since he left me has thrust away every rough thing he done, an' every unkind word he spoke, only th' blossoms that grew out of our lives are before me now, shakin' their colours before me face, an' breathin' their sweet scent on every thought springin' up in me mind, till, sometimes, Mrs Gogan, sometimes I think I'm goin' mad!

Mrs Gogan You'll be a lot better when you have a little lie down.

Nora [turning towards FLUTHER as she is going in] I don't know what I'd have done, only for Fluther. I'd have been lyin' in th' sthreet only for him. . . . [As she goes in] They have driven away th' little happiness life had to spare for me. He has gone from me for ever, for ever. Oh, Jack, Jack, Jack!

[As NORA is led in, BESSIE comes out. She passes down the steps with her head in the air, at the bottom she stops to look back. When they have gone in, she takes a mug of milk from under a shawl she is wearing and gives it to MOLLSER silently. MOLLSER takes it from her.]

Fluther [going from c to the Covey and PRATER, R] Which of yous has the tossers?

The Covey I have.

[BESSIE crosses from MOLLSER to R. She pauses at the corner of the lane, R, to speak to the two men.]

Bessie [scornfully, to FLUTHER and the Covey] You an' your Lendhers, and their sham-battle soldiers has landed a body in a nice way, havin' to go an' ferret out a bit o' bread, God knows where. Why aren't yous in the G P O, if yous are men? It's paler an paler yous are gettin'. A lot of vipers—that's what the Irish people is!

[BESSIE goes up the lane, turns R, and goes out.]

Fluther [warningly] Never mind her [To the Covey] Make a start, an' keep us from th' sin of idleness. [He crosses from R to MOLLSER and speaks to her] Well, how are you to-day, Mollser, oul' son? What are you dhrinkin'? Milk?

Mollser Grand, Fluther, grand, thanks—yes, milk.

Fluther [to MOLLSER] You couldn't get a better thing down you. Thus turn-up has done one good thing, anyhow, you can't get dhrink anywhere, an' if it lasts a

week I'll be so used to it that I won't think of a pint

[FLUTHER returns and joins the two men R The COVEY takes from his pocket two worn coins and a thin strip of wood (or tin) about four inches long He puts the coins on the strip of wood and holds the strip out from him]

The Covey What's the bettin'?

Peter Heads, a juice

Fluther Harps, a tanner.

[The COVEY slips the coins from the wood into the air As they jingle on the ground the distant boom of a big gun is heard They leave the coins where they are and listen intently]

Fluther [awed] What th' hell's that?

The Covey [awed] It's like the boom of a big gun!

Fluther Surely to God, they're not goin' to use artillery on us!

The Covey [scornfully] Not goin'! [Vehemently] Wouldn't they use anything on us, man?

Fluther Aw, holy Christ, that's not playin' th' game!

Peter [plaintively] What would happen if a shell landed here now?

The Covey [ironically] You'd be off to heaven in a fiery chariot

Peter In spite of all th' warnin's that's ringin' around us, are you goin' to start your pickin' at me again?

Fluther Go on, toss them again, toss them again Harps, a tanner

Peter Heads, a juice

[The COVEY tosses the coins as before, they fall on the ground and roll a little FLUTHER waves the other two back as they bend over the rolling coins]

Fluther Let them roll, let them roll—heads be God!

[BESSIE runs in R, runs down the lane towards the three men She is breathless with excitement She has a new fox fur round her neck over her shawl, a number of new umbrellas under one arm, a box of biscuits under the other, and she wears a gaudily trimmed hat on her head She speaks rapidly and breathlessly]

Bessie They're breakin' into th' shops, they're breakin' into th' shops! Smashin' th' windows, batterin' in th' doors an' whip-pin' away everything! An' th' Volunteers is

finn' on them I seen two men an' a lassie pushin' a piano down th' sthreet, an' th' sweat rollin' off them thryin' to get it up on th' pavement, an' an oul' wan that must ha' been seventy lookin' as if she'd dhrop every minute with th' dint o' heart beatin', thryin' to pull a big double bed out of a broken shop window! I was goin' to wait till I dhressed meself from th' skin out

Mollser [to BESSIE, as she is going into the house c] Help me in, Bessie; I'm feelin' curious

[BESSIE leaves the looted things in the house, and, rapidly returning, helps MOLLSEY in]

The Covey [to FLUTHER] Th' selfishness of that one—she waited till she got all she could carry before she'd come to tell anyone!

Fluther [running over to the door of the house and shouting in to BESSIE] Ay, Bessie, did you hear of e'er a pub gettin' a shake up?

Bessie [inside] I didn't hear o' none

Fluther [in a burst of enthusiasm] Well, you're goin' to hear of one soon!

The Covey [to FLUTHER, excitedly] Come on, man, an' don't be wastin' time

Peter [calling to them as they run up the lane] E, eh, are yous goin' to leave me here, alone?

[FLUTHER and COVEY halt in middle of the lane, and turn to look and reply to PETER]

Fluther Are you goin' to leave yourself here?

Peter [anxiously] Didn't yous hear her sayin' they were finn' on them?

The Covey and Fluther [together] Well?

Peter Supposin' I happened to be potted?

Fluther We'd give you a Christian burial, anyhow

The Covey [ironically] Dhressed up in your regimentals

Peter [to the COVEY, passionately] May th' all-lovin' God give you a hot knock one o' these days, me young Covey, tuthorin' Fluther up now to be tiltin' at me, an' crossin' me with his mockeries an' jibin'!

[FLUTHER and COVEY run up the lane, and go off R PETER looks after them and then goes slowly into the house, c]

[After a slight pause, MRS GOGAN appears at the door of the house c, push-

*ing a pram in front of her As she gets the pram over the threshold Bessie appears, catches the pram, and stops Mrs GOGAN's progress]*

*Bessie [angrily]* Here, where are you goin' with that? How quick you were, me lady, to clap your eyes on th' pram. Maybe you don't know that Mrs Sullivan, before she went to spend Easter with her people in Dunboyne, gave me strict injunctions to give an occasional look to see if it was still standin' where it was left in th' corner of th' lobby.

*Mrs Gogan [indignantly]* That remark of yours, Mrs Bessie Burgess, requires a little consideration, seein' that th' pram was left on our lobby, an' not on yours, a foot or two a little to th' left of th' jamb of me own room door, nor is it needful to mention th' name of th' person that gave a squint to see if it was there th' first thing in th' mornin', an' th' last thing in th' stillness o' th' night, never failin' to realize that her eyes couldn't be goin' wrong be stretchin' out her arm an' runnin' her hand over th' pram, to make sure that th' sight was no deception! Moreover, somethin's tellin' me that th' runnin' hurry of an inthrest you're takin' in it now is a sudden ambition to use th' pram for a purpose, that a loyal woman of law an' ordher would stagger away from!

*[MRS GOGAN pushes the pram violently down the steps, pulling BESSIE with her, who holds her up again when they reach the street]*

*Bessie [still holding the pram]* There's not as much as one body in th' house that doesn't know that it wasn't Bessie Burgess that was always shakin' her voice complainin' about people leavin' bassinettes in th' way of them that, week in an' week out, had to pay their rent, an' always had to find a regular accommodation for her own furniture in her own room. An' as for law an' ordher, puttin' aside th' harp an' shamrock, Bessie Burgess 'll have as much respect as she wants for th' lion an' unicorn!

*Peter [appearing at the door of the house, c]* I think I'll go with th' pair of yours an' see th' fun. A fella might as well chance it, anyhow.

*Mrs Gogan [taking no notice of PETER, and pushing the pram on towards the lane]* Take your rovin' lumps o' hands from pattin' th' bassinette, if you please, ma'am,

an', steppin' from th' threshold of good manners, let me tell you, Mrs Burgess, that it's a fat wondher to Jennie Gogan that a lady-like singer o' hymns like yourself would lower her thoughts from sky-thinkin' to stretch out her arm in a sly-seekin' way to pinch anything dhruven astray in th' confusion of th' battle our boys is makin' for th' freedom of their counthry!

*Peter [laughing and rubbing his hands together]* Hee, hee, hee, hee, hee! I'll go with th' pair o' yours an' give you a hand.

*Mrs Gogan [with a rapid turn of her head as she shoves the pram forward]* Get up in th' prambulator an' we'll wheel you down.

*Bessie [to MRS GOGAN as she halts the pram again]* Poverty an' hardship has sent Bessie Burgess to abide with strange company, but she always knew them she had to live with from backside to breakfast time, an' she can tell them, always havin' had a Christian kinch on her conscience, that a passion for thievin' an' pinchin' would find her soul a foreign place to live in, an' that her present intention is quite th' lofty-hearted one of pickin' up anything shaken up an' scattered about in th' loose confusion of a general plunder!

*[MRS GOGAN, BESSIE and the pram run up the lane and go off. PETER follows, but as he reaches the corner of the lane the boom of the big gun brings him to a sudden halt]*

*Peter [frightened into staying behind by the sound of the gun]* God Almighty, that's th' big gun again! God forbid any harm would happen to them, but sorra mind I'd mind if they met with a dhrop in their mad endeyvours to plunder an' destroy.

*[He looks down the street from the lane for a moment, then runs to the hall door of the house, c, which is open, and shuts it with a vicious pull, he then goes to the chair in which MOLLER had sat, sits down, takes out his pipe, lights it and begins to smoke with his head carried at a haughty angle. The Covey comes in and down the lane, staggering with a ten-stone sack of flour on his back. He goes over to the door, pushes it with his head, and finds he can't open it, he turns slightly in the direction of PETER]*

*The Covey [to PETER]* Who shut th' door? *[He kicks at it]* Here, come on

an' open it, will you? This isn't a mot's hand-bag I've got on me back

*Peter* Now, me young Covey, d'ye think I'm goin' to be your lackey?

*The Covey [angrily]* Will you open th' door, y'oul'—

*Peter [shouting]*. Don't be assin' me to open any door, don't be assin' me to open any door for you. . . . Makin' a shame an' a sin o' th' cause that good men are fightin' for . . . Oh, God forgive th' people that, instead o' burnishin' th' work th' boys is doin' to-day, with quiet honesty an' patience, is revilin' their sacrifices with a riot of lootin', an' roguery!

*The Covey [sarcastically]* Isn't your own eyes leppin' out o' your head with envy that you haven't th' guts to ketch a few o' th' things that God is givin' to His chosen people? . . . Y'oul' hypocrite, if every one was blind you'd steal a cross off an ass's back!

*Peter [very calmly]* You're not goin' to make me lose me temper, you can go on with your proddin' as long as you like, goad an' goad an' goad away, hee hee, heee! I'll not lose me temper

[Somebody opens door and the COVEY goes in]

*Covey [inside house, to mock PETER]*  
Cuckoo-oo!

[PETER gets up from chair in a blaze of passion, and follows the COVEY in, shouting]

*Peter [shouting]* You lean, long, lanky lath of a lowsey bastard. [Going in door of house, c] Lowsey bastard, lowsey bastard!

[MRS GOGAN and BESSIE, pushing the pram, come in R, come down lane to front of the house, c BESSIE is pushing the pram, which is filled with loot. MRS GOGAN carries a tall standard lamp, topped with a wide and bright-coloured shade. The pram is filled with fancy-coloured dresses, and boots and shoes. They are talking as they appear R]

*Mrs Gogan [appearing R]* I don't remember ever havin' seen such lovely pairs as them with the pointed toes an' the cuban heels

*Bessie [they are now c, lifting one of the evening dresses from the pram, holding it up admiringly]* They'll go grand with th' dhresses we're afther liftin', when we've

stitched a sthray bit o' silk to lift th' bodices up a little bit higher, so as to shake th' shame out o' them, an' make them fit for women that hasn't lost themselves in th' nakedness o' th' times

*Peter [at door, sourly to MRS. GOGAN]* Ay, you Mollser looks as if she was goin' to faint, an' your youngster is roarin' in convulsions in her lap

*Mrs Gogan [snappily]*. She's never any other way but faintin'!

[MRS GOGAN runs into the house with her arm full of things. She comes back, takes up the lamp and is about to go in, when a rifle shot very near is heard. MRS GOGAN, with lamp, and BESSIE, with pram, rush to the door which PETER, in a panic, has shut]

*Mrs Gogan [banging at the door]* Eh, eh, you cowardly oul' fool, what are you thryin' to shut the door on us for?

[MRS GOGAN pushes the door open and runs in, followed by BESSIE dragging in the pram. They shut the door. A pause. Then CAPT BRENNAN, supporting LIEUT. LANGON, comes in L, along the street in front of the house, c. As BRENNAN and LANGON reach c going R, CLITHEROE, pale and in a state of calm nervousness, appears at L, walking backwards or looking back in the direction from which they've come, he has a rifle held at the ready in his hands. LANGON is ghastly white and now and again his face is twisted in agony]

*Capt Brennan [back to CLITHEROE]* Why did you fire over their heads? Why didn't you fire to kill?

*Clitheroe* No, no, Bill, bad as they are, they're Irish men an' women

[BRENNAN gently lets LANGON recline on the steps of the house indicated to the extreme R, holding him by an arm. CLITHEROE is c, watching LANGON]

*Capt Brennan [savagely]* Irish be damned! Attackin' an' mobbin' th' men that are riskin' their lives for them. If these slum lice gather at our heels again, plug one o' them, or I'll soon shock them with a shot or two meself!

*Lieut Langon [moaningly]* My God, is there ne'er an ambulance knockin' around anywhere? . . . Th' stomach is ripped out o' me, I feel it—o-o-oh, Christ!

Capt Brennan Keep th' heart up, Jim, we'll soon get help, now

[Door of house c opens and NORA rushes out, dashes down steps into CLITHEROE'S arms at bottom She flings her arms around his neck Her hair is down, her face haggard, but her eyes are agleam with happy relief]

Nora [to CLITHEROE] Jack, Jack, oh, God be thanked Kiss me, kiss me, Jack, kiss your own Nora

Clitheroe [kissing her, and speaking brokenly] My Nora, my little, beautiful Nora, I wish to God I'd never left you

Nora It doesn't matter—not now, not now, Jack It will make us dearer than ever to each other . Kiss me, kiss me again

Clitheroe Now, for God's sake, Nora, don't make a scene

Nora [servently] I won't, I won't, I promise, Jack—honest to God

[BESSIE opens window of house to the R, puts out her head, and shouts at CLITHEROE and BRENNAN]

Bessie [at window] Has th' big guns knocked all th' harps out of your hands? General Clitheroe'd rather be unlacin' his wife's bodice now, than standin' at a barricade [To BRENNAN] An' the professor of chicken butcherin', there, finds he's up against something a little tougher than his own chickens, an' that's sayin' a lot!

Capt Brennan [over to BESSIE] Shut up, y'oul' hag!

Bessie [down to BRENNAN] Choke th' chicken, choke th' chicken, choke th' chicken!

Lieut Langon For God's sake, Bill, bring me some place where me wound 'll be looked afther Am I to die before anything is done to save me?

Capt Brennan [to CLITHEROE] Come on, Jack We've got to get help for Jim, here—have you no thought for his pain an' danger?

Bessie Choke th' chicken, choke th' chicken, choke th' chicken!

Clitheroe [to NORA] Loosen me, darling, let me go

Nora [clinging to him] No, no, no, I'll not let you go! Come on, come up to our home, Jack my sweetheart, my lover, my husband, an' we'll forget th' last few terrible days!

Lieut Langon [appealingly] Oh, if I'd

kep' down only a little longer, I mightn't ha' been hit! Every one else escapin', an' me gettin' me belly ripped asundher! I couldn't scream, couldn't even scream D'ye think I'm really badly wounded, Bill? Me clothes seem to be all soakin' wet It's blood . My God, it must be me own blood!

Capt Brennan [to CLITHEROE] Go on, Jack, bid her good-bye with another kiss, an' be done with it! D'ye want Langon to die in me arms while you're dallyn' with your Nora?

Clitheroe [to NORA] I must go, I must go, Nora I'm sorry we met at all . It couldn't be helped—all other ways were blocked be th' British . . . Let me go, can't you, Nora? D'ye want me to be unthru to me comrades?

Nora No, I won't let you go I want you to be thru to me, Jack I'm your dearest comrade, I'm your thurst comrade [Tightening her arms round CLITHEROE] Oh, Jack, I can't let you go!

Clitheroe [with anger, mixed with affection] You must, Nora, you must.

Nora All last night at the barricades I sought you, Jack I asked for you everywhere I didn't think of the danger—I could only think of you They dhrove me away, but I came back again.

Clitheroe [ashamed of her action] What possessed you to make a show of yourself, like that! What are you more than any other woman?

Nora No more, maybe, but you are more to me than any other man, Jack I couldn't help it . I shouldn't have told you My love for you made me mad with terror

Clitheroe [angrily] They'll say now that I sent you out th' way I'd have an excuse to bring you home Are you goin' to turn all th' risks I'm takin' into a laugh?

Lieut Langon Let me lie down, let me lie down, Bill, th' pain would be easier, maybe, lyin' down . Oh, God, have mercy on me!

Capt Brennan [encouragingly to LANGON] A few steps more, Jim, a few steps more, thry to stick it for a few steps more

Lieut Langon Oh, I can't, I can't, I can't!

Capt Brennan [to CLITHEROE] Are you comin', man, or are you goin' to make an arrangement for another honeymoon?



If you want to act th' renegade, say so, an' we'll be off!

Bessie [*from window*] Runnin' from th' Tommies—choke th' chicken Runnin' from th' Tommies—choke th' chicken!

Clitheroe [*savagely to BRENNAN*] Damn you, man, who wants to act th' renegade? [*To NORA*] Here, let go your hold, let go, I say!

Nora [*clinging to CLITHEROE, and indicating BRENNAN*] Look, Jack, look at th' anger in his face; look at th' fear glintin' in his eyes . . . He, himself's afraid, afraid, afraid! . . . He wants you to go th' way he'll have th' chance of death sthrikin' you an' missin' him!

Clitheroe [*struggling to release himself from NORA*] Damn you, woman, will you let me go!

Capt Brennan [*fiercely, to CLITHEROE*]. Break her hold on you, man, or go up an' sit on her lap!

[*CLITHEROE tries to break her hold with his right hand (he's holding rifle in the other), but NORA clings to him*]

Nora [*imploringly*] Jack, Jack, Jack!

Lieut Langan [*agonizingly*] Brennan, a priest, I'm dyin', I think I'm dyin'!

Clitheroe [*to NORA*] If you won't do it quietly, I'll have to make you! [*To BRENNAN*] Here, hold this gun, you, for a minute

[*He hands the gun to BRENNAN*]

Nora [*pitifully*] Please, Jack  
You're hurting me, Jack . . . Honestly  
Oh, you're hurting me! I  
won't, I won't, I won't! Oh, Jack, I  
gave you everything you asked of me  
Don't fling me from you, now!

[*He roughly loosens her grip, and pushes her away from him, NORA sinks to the steps at the door, and lies there*]

Nora [*weakly*] Ah, Jack . . . Jack  
Jack!

Clitheroe [*taking the gun back from BRENNAN*] Come on, come on

[*CLITHEROE hurries over to BRENNAN, catches hold of LANGON'S other arm; they both lift him up from steps, and supporting him, turn into the lane and go off R*]

[*BESSIE looks at NORA lying on the street, for a few moments, then, leaving the window, she comes out, runs over to NORA, lifts her up in her arms, and carries her swiftly into the house*  
A short pause, then down the street is

heard a wild, drunken yell, it comes nearer, and FLUTHER enters, frenzied, wild-eyed, mad, roaring drunk In his arms is an earthen half-gallon jar of whisky, streaming from one of the pockets of his coat is the arm of a new tunic shirt, on his head is a woman's vivid blue hat with gold lacing, all of which he has looted]

[*The evening begins to darken*]

Fluther [*singing in a frenzy, as he comes down the lane*]

Fluther's a jolly good fella . .

Fluther's a jolly good fella . . . up th' rebels!

. . . that nobody can deny!

[*He reels across to L, staggers up the steps of the house, c, and hammers at the door*]  
Get us a mug, or a jug, or somethin', some o' yours, one o' yours, will yous, before I lay one o' yours out!

[*Rifle firing is heard some distance away and the boom of the big gun*  
FLUTHER turns from the door, and looks off R]

Bang an' fire away for all Fluther cares [*He beats at the door*] Come down an' open th' door, some o' yours, one o' yours, will yous, before I lay some o' yours out! . .  
Th' whole city can topple home to hell, for Fluther

[*Inside the house, c, is heard a scream from NORA, followed by a moan*]

[*Singing frantically*] That nobody can deny, that nobody can deny,

For Fluther's a jolly good fella,

Fluther's a jolly good fella,

Fluther's a jolly good fella . . up th' rebels!

that nobody can deny!

[*His frantic movements cause him to spill some of the whisky out of the jar*]

[*Looking down at jar*] Blast you, Fluther, don't be spillin' th' precious liquor! [*He licks at the door*] Give us a mug, or a jug, or somethin', one o' yours, some o' yours, will yous, before I lay one o' yours out!

[*The door suddenly opens, and BESSIE, coming out, grips him by the collar*]

Bessie [*indignantly*] You bowsey come in ower o' that I'll thrim your thricks o' dhrunken dancin' for you, an' none of us knowin' how soon we'll bump into a world we were never in before!

Fluther [*as she is pulling him in*] Ay, th' jar, th' jar, th' jar Mind th' jar!

[A short pause, then again is heard a scream of pain from NORA The door opens and MRS GOGAN and BESSIE are seen standing at it]

[The light gets dim]

Bessie Fluther would go, only he's too dhrunk Oh, God, isn't it a pity he's so dhrunk! We'll have to thry to get a docthor somewhere

Mrs Gogan I'd be afraid to go Besides, Mollser's terrible bad I don't think you'll get a docthor to come It's hardly any use goin'

Bessie [determinedly] I'll risk it Give her a little of Fluther's whisky. It's th' fright that's brought it on her so soon

Go on back to her, you

[MRS GOGAN goes into the house, and BESSIE softly closes the door She comes down steps, and is half-way across to R, when rifle-firing and the tok-tok-tok of a machine-gun bring her to a sudden halt She hesitates for a moment, then tightens her shawl round her, as if it were a shield]

[Softly] O God, be Thou my help in time o' throuble, an' shelter me safely in th' shadow of Thy wings

[She goes forward, goes up the lane, and goes off R]

#### ACT FOUR

SCENE—The living-room of BESSIE BURGESS It is one of two small attic rooms (the other, used as a bedroom, is on the L), the low ceiling slopes down towards the back. There is an unmistakable air of poverty about the room. The paper on the walls is torn and soiled. On the R, downstage, is a door. A small window C back. To L of window, a well-worn dresser, with a small quantity of Delft. On the L wall, upstage is a door leading to a bedroom. The door on R leads to the rest of the house and street. Below door on L wall, the fireplace. Inside fender is a kettle and saucepan. On the hob a teapot. In front of fire a well-worn armchair. In front of window, back, a little to R, an oak coffin stands on two kitchen chairs. On floor, front of coffin, is a wooden box, on which are two lighted candles in candlesticks. In front of coffin, a little to L, a small kitchen table. At R end of table, a kitchen chair. In corner where R and back walls meet, the standard lamp,

with coloured shade, looted in Third Aet, stands, beside the lamp, hanging from nail in wall, back, hangs one of the evening dresses. There is no light in the room but that given from the two candles and the fire. The dusk has well fallen, and the glare of the burning buildings in the town can be seen through the windows in the distant sky. The COVEY, FLUTHER and PETER have been playing cards, sitting on the floor by the light of the candles on the box near the coffin. When the CURTAIN rises the COVEY is shuffling the cards, PETER is sitting in a stiff, dignified way opposite him, and FLUTHER is kneeling beside the window, back, cautiously looking out into street. It is a few days later.

Fluther [furtively peeping out of the window] Give them a good shuffling. Th' sky's gettin' reddher an' reddher. You'd thunk it was afire. Half o' th' city must be burnin'.

The Covey [warningly] If I was you, Fluther, I'd keep away from that window.

It's dangerous, an', besides, if they see you, you'll only bring a nose on th' house.

Peter [anxiously] Yes, an' he knows we had to leave our own place th' way they were riddin' it with machine-gun fire. He'll keep on pimpin' an' pimpin' there, till we have to fly out o' this place too.

Fluther [ironically to PETER] If they make any attack here, we'll send you out in your green an' glory uniform, shakin' your sword over your head, an' they'll fly before you as th' Danes flew before Brian Boru!

The Covey [placing the cards on the floor, after shuffling them]. Come on, an' cut.

[FLUTHER creeps, L end of table, over to where COVEY and PETER are seated, and squats down on floor between them]

[Having dealt the cards] Spuds up again.

[NORA moans feebly in room on L. They listen for a moment.]

Fluther There, she's at it again. She's been quiet for a good long time, all th' same.

The Covey She was quiet before, sure, an' she broke out again worse than ever. What was led that time?

Peter [impatiently] Thray o' Hearts, Thray o' Hearts, Thray o' Hearts.

Fluther It's damned hard lines to think of her dead-born kiddie lyin' there in th'



arms o' poor little Mollser Mollser snuffed it, sudden too, afther all

*The Covey* Sure she never got any care How could she get it, an' th' mother out day and night lookin' for work, an' her consumptive husband leavin' her with a baby to be born before he died

*Voices [in a lilting chant to the L in an outside street]* Red Cr . oss, Red Cr oss! . . Ambu lance, Ambu lance!

*The Covey [to FLUTHER]* Your deal, Fluther

*Fluther [shuffling and dealing the cards]* It'll take a lot out o' Nora—if she'll ever be th' same

*The Covey* Th' docthor thinks she'll never be th' same, thinks she'll be a little touched here [*He touches his forehead*] She's ramblin' a lot, thinkin' she's out in th' counthry with Jack, or, gettin' his dinner ready for him before he comes home, or, yellin' for her kiddie All that, though, might be th' chloroform she got I don't know what we'd have done only for oul' Bessie up with her for th' past three nights, hand runnin'

*Fluther [approvingly]* I always knew there was never anything really derogatory wrong with poor Bessie [*Suddenly catching PETER'S arm as he is taking a trick*] Eh, houl' on there, don't be so damn quick—that's my thrick!

*Peter [resentfully]* What's your thrick? It's my thrick, man.

*Fluther [loudly]* How is it your thrick?

*Peter [answering as loudly]* Didn't I lead th' deuce!

*Fluther* You must be gettin' blind, man, don't you see th' ace?

*Bessie [appearing at door of room, L, in a tense whisper]* D'ye want to waken her again on me, when she's just gone asleep? If she wakes will yous come an' mind her? If I hear a whisper out o' one o' yous again, I'll gut yous!

*The Covey [in a whisper]* S-s-s-h She can hear anything above a whisper

*Peter [looking up at the ceiling]* Th' gentle an' merciful God 'll give th' pair o' yous a scawldin, an' a scarifyin' one o' these days!

[*FLUTHER takes a bottle of whisky from his pocket, and takes a drink*]

*The Covey [to FLUTHER]* Why don't

you spread that out, man, an' thry to keep a sup for to-morrow?

*Fluther* Spread it out? Keep a sup for to-morrow? How th' hell does a fella know there'll be any to-morrow? If I'm goin' to be whipped away, let me be whipped away when it's empty, an' not when it's half-full!

[*BESSIE comes in a tired way from door of room L, down to armchair by fire, and sits down*]

[*Over to BESSIE*] Well, how is she now, Bessie?

*Bessie* I left her sleeping quietly When I'm listenin' to her babblin', I think she'll never be much betther than she is Her eyes have a hauntin' way of lookin' in instead of lookin' out, as if her mind had been lost alive in madly minglin' memories of th' past . . . [*Sleepily*] Crushin' her thoughts

. . . together . . . in a fierce an' fanciful . . . [*she nods her head and starts wakefully*] idea that dead things are livin', an' livin' things are dead . . . [*With a start*] Was that a scream I heard her give? [*Reassured*] Blessed God, I think I hear her screamin' every minute! An' it's only there with me that I'm able to keep awake

*The Covey* She'll sleep, maybe, for a long time, now Ten here

*Fluther [gathering up cards]* Ten here If she gets a long sleep, she might be all right Peter's th' lone five

*The Covey [suddenly]* Whisht! I think I hear somebody movin' below. Whoever it is, he's comin' up

[*A pause Then the door, R opens, and CAPT BRENNAN comes timidly in He has changed his uniform for a suit of civies His eyes droop with the heaviness of exhaustion; his face is pallid and drawn His clothes are dusty and stained here and there with mud He leans heavily on the back of a chair R end of table*]

*Capt Brennan* Mrs Clitheroe, where's Mrs Clitheroe? I was told I'd find her here

*Bessie* What d'ye want with Mrs Clitheroe?

*Capt Brennan* I've a message, a last message for her from her husband

*Bessie* Killed! He's not killed, is he!

*Capt Brennan [sinking stiffly and painfully on to a chair]* In th' Imperial Hotel; we fought till th' place was in flames He was shot through th' arm, an' then through

th' lung I could do nothin' for him—only watch his breath comin' an' goin' in quick, jerky gasps, an' a tiny sthream o' blood thricklin' out of his mouth down over his lower lip

I said a prayer for th' dyn', an' twined hrs Rosary beads around his fingers Then I had to leave him to save meself

[*He shows some holes in his coat*] Look at th' way a machine-gun tore at me coat, as I belted out o' th' buildin' an' darted across th' sthreet for shelter

An' then, I seen The Plough an' th' Stars fallin' like a shot as th' roof crashed in, an' where I'd left poor Jack was nothin' but a leppin' spout o' flame!

Bessie [*with partly repressed vehemence*] Ay, you left him! You twined his Rosary beads round his fingers, an' then, you run like a hare to get out o' danger!

Capt Brennan [*defensively*] I took me chance as well as him He took it like a man His last whisper was to "Tell Nora to be brave, that I'm ready to meet my God, an' that I'm proud to die for Ireland" An' when our General heard it he said that "Commandant Clitheroe's end was a gleam of glory" Mrs Clitheroe's grief will be a joy when she realizes that she has had a hero for a husband

Bessie If you only seen her, you'd know to th' differ

[*NORA appears at door, L. She is clad only in her nightdress and slippers, her hair, uncared for some days, is hanging in disorder over her shoulders Her pale face looks paler still because of a vivid red spot on the tip of each cheek Her eyes are glimmering with the light of incipient insanity, her hands are nervously fiddling with her nightgown She halls at the door for a moment, looks vacantly around the room, and then comes slowly in The rest do not notice her till she speaks Bessie has fallen asleep in chair*]

PETER, COVEY and FLUTHER stop their card-playing and watch her]

Nora [*roaming slowly towards R to back of table*] No not there, Jack I feel very, very tired

[*Passing her hand across her eyes*] Curious mist on my eyes Why don't you hold my hand, Jack

[*Excitedly*] No, no, Jack, it's not can't you see it's a goldfinch? Look at the black satin wings, with the gold bars, an' th' splash of crimson on its head

[*Wearily*]

Something ails me, something ails me [*Frightened*] You're goin' away, an' I can't follow you! [*She wanders back to L end of table*] I can't follow you [*Crying out*] Jack, Jack, Jack!

[*Bessie wakes with a start, sees NORA, gets up and runs to her*]

Bessie [*putting arm round NORA*] Mrs Clitheroe, aren't you a terrible woman to get up out o' bed You'll get cold if you stay here in them clothes

Nora [*monotonously*] Cold? I'm feelin' very cold it's chully out here in th' counthry [*Looking around, frightened*] What place is this? Where am I?

Bessie [*coaxingly*] You're all right, Nora, you're with friends, an' in a safe place Don't you know your uncle an' your cousin, an' poor oul' Fluther?

Peter [*rising to go over to NORA*] Nora, darlin', now—

Fluther [*pulling him back*] Now, leave her to Bessie, man A crowd 'll only make her worse

Nora [*thoughtfully*] There is something I want to remember, an' I can't [*With agony*] I can't, I can't, I can't! My head, my head! [*Suddenly breaking from Bessie, and running over to the men, and gripping FLUTHER by the shoulders*] Where is it? Where's my baby? Tell me where you've put it, where've you hidden it? My baby, my baby, I want my baby! My head, my poor head Oh, I can't tell what is wrong with me [*Screaming*] Give him to me, give me my husband!

Bessie Blessin' o' God on us, isn't this pitiful!

Nora [*struggling with Bessie*] I won't go away for you, I won't Not till you give me back my husband [*Screaming*] Murderers, that's what yous are, murderers, murderers!

[*Bessie gently, but firmly, pulls her from FLUTHER, and tries to lead her to room, L*]

Bessie [*tenderly*] Ss-s-sh We'll bring Mr Clitheroe back to you, if you'll only lie down an' stop quiet [*Trying to lead her in*] Come on, now, Nora, an' I'll sing something to you

Nora I feel as if my life was thryin' to force its way out of my body I can hardly breathe I'm frightened, I'm frightened, I'm frightened! For God's sake,

don't leave me, Bessie Hold my hand, put your arms around me!

*Fluther [to BRENNAN]* Now you can see th' way she is, man

*Peter* An' what way would she be if she heard Jack had gone west?

*The Covey [to PETER, warningly]* Shut up, you, man!

*Bessie [to NORA]* We'll have to be brave, an' let patience clip away th' heaviness of th' slow-movin' hours, rememberin' that sorrow may endure for th' night, but joy cometh in th' mornin' Come on in, an' I'll sing to you, an' you'll rest quietly

*Nora [stopping suddenly on her way to the room]* Jack an' me are goin' out somewhere this evenin' Where I can't tell Isn't it curious I can't remember

*[Screaming, and pointing R]* He's there, he's there, an' they won't give him back to me!

*Bessie* S-ss-s-h, darlin', s-ssh I won't sing to you, if you're not quiet

*Nora [nervously holding BESSIE]* Hold my hand, hold my hand, an' sing to me, sing to me!

*Bessie* Come in an' lie down, an' I'll sing to you

*Nora [vehemently]* Sing to me, sing to me, sing, sing!

*Bessie [singing as she leads NORA into room, L]*

Lead, kindly light, amid th' encircling gloom,

Lead Thou me on  
Th' night is dark an' I am far from home,  
Lead Thou me on

*[Leading NORA, BESSIE goes into room, L]*

*[Singing softly inside room, L]*  
Keep thou my feet, I do not ask to see  
Th' distant scene—one step enough for me

*Covey [to BRENNAN]* Now that you've seen how bad she is, an' that we daren't tell her what has happened till she's better, you'd best be shippin' back to where you come from

*Capt Brennan* There's no chance o' shippin' back now, for th' military are everywhere a fly couldn't get through I'd never have got here, only I managed to change me uniform for what I'm wearin' I'll have to take me chance, an' thry to lie low here for a while

*The Covey [frightened]* There's no place here to lie low Th' Tommies 'll be hoppin' in here, any minute!

*Peter [aghast]* An' then we'd all be shanghaied!

*The Covey* Be God, there's enough afther happenin' to us!

*Fluther [warningly, as he listens]* Whisht, whisht, th' whole o' yous I think I heard th' clang of a rifle butt on th' floor of th' hall below *[All alertness]* Here, come on with th' cards again I'll deal *[He shuffles and deals the cards to all]* Clubs up *[To BRENNAN]* Thry to keep your hands from shakin', man You lead, Peter *[As PETER throws out a card]* Four o' Hearts led

*[Heavy steps are heard coming up stairs, outside door R The door opens and CORPORAL STODDART of the Wilt-shires enters in full war kit—steel helmet, rifle, bayonet and trench tools He stands near door R, looks around the room, and at the men who go on silently playing cards A pause]*

*[Gathering up cards, and breaking the silence]* Two tens an' a five

*Corporal Stoddart* 'Ello *[Indicating the coffin]* This the stiff?

*The Covey* Yis

*Corporal Stoddart* Who's gowing with it? Ownly one allowed to gow with it, you knaow

*The Covey* I dunno

*Corporal Stoddart* You dunnow?

*The Covey* I dunno

*Bessie [coming into the room]* She's afther shippin' off to sleep again, thanks be to God I'm hardly able to keep me own eyes open *[To the soldier]* Oh, are yous goin' to take away poor little Mollser?

*Corporal Stoddart* Ay, 'oo's agowing with 'er?

*Bessie* Oh, th' poor mother, o' course God help her, it's a terrible blow to her!

*Fluther* A terrible blow? Sure, she's in her element now, woman, mixin' earth to earth, an' ashes t'ashes, an' dust to dust, an' revellin' in plumes an' hearses, last days an' judgements!

*Bessie [falling into chair by the fire]* God bless us! I'm jaded!

*Corporal Stoddart* Was she plugged?

*Covey [shortly]* No, died of consumption

*Corporal Stoddart [carelessly]* Ow, is that all—thought she might 'ave been plugged

*Covey [indignantly]* Is that all! Isn't it enough? D'ye know, comrade, that more

die o' consumption than are killed in the war? An' it's all because of th' system we're livin' undher

*Corporal Stoddart* Ow, I know I'm a Socialist, myself, but I 'as to do my dooty

*Covey [ironically]* Dooty! Th' only dooty of a Socialist is th' emancipation of th' workers

*Corporal Stoddart* Ow, a man's a man, an' 'e 'as to fight for 'is country, 'asn't 'e?

*Fluther [aggressively]* You're not fightin' for your country here, are you?

*Peter [anxiously, to FLUTHER]* Ay, ay, Fluther, none o' that, none o' that!

*The Covey* Fight for your country! Did y'e'ver read, comrade, Jenersky's *Thesis on the Origin, Development an' Consoldation of th' Evolutionary Idea of the Proletariat?*

*Corporal Stoddart [good-humouredly]* Ow, cheese it, Paddy, cheese it!

*Bessie [sleepily]* How is things in th' town, Tommy?

*Corporal Stoddart* Ow, I think it's nearly over We've got 'em surrounded, an' we're closing in on the blighters It was only a bit of a dorg-fight

*[Outside in the street is heard the sharp ping of a sniper's rifle, followed by a squeal of pain]*

*Voices [to the L in a chant, outside in street]* Red Cr oss, Red Cr oss! Ambu lance, Ambu lance!

*Corporal Stoddart [going up R and looking out of window, back]* Christ, there's another of our men 'it by the blarsted sniper! 'E's knocking abaht 'ere some-where's *[Venomously]* Gord, wen we gets the blighter, we'll give 'im the cold steel, we will We'll jab the belly aht of 'im, we will!

*[MRS GOGAN enters tearfully by door R, she is a little proud of the importance of being connected with death]*

*Mrs Gogan [to FLUTHER]* I'll never forget what you done for me, Fluther, goin' around at th' risk of your life settlin' everything with th' undhertaker an' th' cemetery people When all me own were afraid to put their noses out, you plunged like a good one through hummin' bullets, an' they knockin' fire out o' th' road, tinklin' through th' frightened windows, an' splashin' themselves to pieces on th' walls! An' you'll find, that Mollser in th' happy place she's gone to, won't forget to whisper, now an' again, th' name o' Fluther

*[CORPORAL STODDART comes from window down R to door R, and stands near the door]*

*Corporal Stoddart [to MRS GOGAN]* Git it aht, mother, git it aht

*Bessie [from the chair]* It's excusin' me you'll be, Mrs Gogan, for not stannin' up, seen' I'm shaky on me feet for want of a little sleep, an' not desirin' to show any disrespect to poor little Mollser

*Fluther* Sure, we all know, Bessie, that it's vice versa with you

*Mrs Gogan [to BESSIE]* Indeed, it's me-self that has well chronicled, Mrs Burgess, all your gentle hurryin's to me little Mollser, when she was alive, bringin' her somethin' to dhrink, or somethin' t'eat, an' never passin' her without lifting up her heart with a delicate word o' kindness

*Corporal Stoddart [impatiently, but kindly]* Git it aht, git it aht, mother

*[The men rise from their card-playing, FLUTHER and BRENNAN go R to R end of coffin, PETER and COVEY go L of table to L end of coffin One of them take box and candles out of way They carry coffin down R and out by door R, CORPORAL STODDART watching them MRS GOGAN follows the coffin out]*

*[A pause CORPORAL STODDART, at door R, turns towards BESSIE]*

*[To BESSIE, who is almost asleep]* 'Ow many men is in this 'ere 'ouse? *[No answer Loudly]* 'Ow many men is in this 'ere 'ouse?

*Bessie [waking with a start]* God, I was nearly asleep! How many men? Didn't you see them?

*Corporal Stoddart* Are they all that are in the 'ouse?

*Bessie [sleepily]* Oh, there's none higher up, but there may be more lower down Why?

*Corporal Stoddart* All men in the district 'as to be rounded up Somebody's givin' 'elp to the snipers, an' we 'as to tike precautions If I 'ad my wy I'd mike 'em all join up an' do their bit! But I suppose they an' you are all Shinnars

*Bessie [who has been sinking into sleep, waking up to a sleepy vehemence]* Bessie Burgess is no Shinner, an' never had no thruck with anything spotted be th' fingers o' th' Fenians But always made it her business to harness herself for Church when-

ever she knew that God Save The King was goin' to be sung at t'end of th' service, whose only son went to th' front in th' first contingent of the Dublin Fusiliers, an' that's on his way home carryin' a shatthered arm that he got fightin' for his King an' counthry!

[BESSIE'S head sinks slowly forward again Door, R, opens and PETER comes in, his body stiff, and his face contorted with anger He goes up R, to back, and paces angrily from side to side COVEY, with a sly grin on his face, and FLUTHER follow PETER FLUTHER goes to L and COVEY goes to R end of table BRENNAN follows in and sinks to back of table to L corner between dresser and door, L CORPORAL STODDART remains standing a little in from door R]

Fluther [after an embarrassing pause] Th' air in th' sthreet outside's shakin' with the firin' o' rifles, an' machine-guns It must be a hot shop in th' middle o' th' scrap

Corporal Stoddart We're pumping lead in on 'em from every side, now, they'll soon be shoving up th' white flag

Peter [with a shout at FLUTHER and COVEY] I'm tellin' you either o' yous two lowzers 'ud make a bettther hearseman than Peter! proddin' an' pokin' at me an' I helpin' to carry out a corpse!

Fluther [provokingly] It wasn't a very derogatory thing for th' Covey to say that you'd make a fancy hearseman, was it?

Peter [furiously] A pair o' redjesthered, bowseys pondherin' from mornin' till night on how they'll get a chance to break a gap through th' quiet nature of a man that's always endeavourin' to chase out of him any sthray thought of venom against his fella-man!

The Covey Oh, shut it, shut it, shut it!

Peter [furiously] As long as I'm a livin' man, responsible for me thoughts, words an' deeds to th' Man above, I'll feel meself instituted to fight again' th' shddherin' ways of a pair o' picaroons, whisperin', concurrin', concoctin', an' conspirin' together to rendher me unconscious of th' life I'm thryin' to live!

Corporal Stoddart [dumbfounded] What's wrong, Paddy, wot 'ave they done to you?

Peter [savagely to the CORPORAL] You

mind your own business! What's it got to do with you, what's wrong with me?

Bessie [in a sleepy murmur] Will yous thry to conthrol yourselves into quietness? You'll waken her up on . me . again [She sleeps]

Fluther [coming c] Come on, boys, to th' cards again, an' never mind him

Corporal Stoddart No use of you going to start cards, you'll be going aht of 'ere, soon as Sergeant comes

Fluther [in surprise] Goin out o' here? An' why're we goin' out o' here?

Corporal Stoddart All men in district 'as to be rounded up, an' 'eld in till the scrap is over

Fluther [concerned] An' where're we goin' to be held in?

Corporal Stoddart They're puttin' them in a church

Covey [astounded] A church?

Fluther What sort of a church? Is it a Protestan' church?

Corporal Stoddart I dunno, I suppose so

Fluther [in dismay] Be God, it'll be a nice thing to be stuck all night in a Protestan' church!

Corporal Stoddart If I was you, I'd bring the cards—you might get a chance of a game

Fluther [hesitant] Ah, no, that wouldn't do . . I wondher [After a moment's thought] Ah, I don't think we'd be doin' anything derogatory be playin' cards in a Protestan' church

Corporal Stoddart If I was you I'd bring a little snack with me, you might be glad of it before the morning [Lalting]

Oh, I do like a snice mince pie,

Oh, I do like a snice mince pie

[Again the snap of the sniper's rifle rings out, followed by a scream of pain CORPORAL STODDART goes pale, runs up R to near window, c, with his rifle at the ready]

Voices [in street to R, chanting] Red Cr oss Red Cr . oss! Ambu lance . Ambu . lance!

[The door R is dashed open, and SERGEANT TINLEY, pale, agitated, and angry, comes rapidly in He stands inside the door, glaring at men in the room CORPORAL STODDART swings round at the ready as TINLEY enters and lets

his rifle drop when he sees the SERGEANT]

Corporal Stoddart [to SERGEANT] One of our men 'it again, Sergeant?

Sergeant Tinley [angrily] Private Taylor got it right through the chest, 'e did, an' 'ole in front as ow you could put your 'and through, an' arf 'is back blown awy! Dum-dum bullets they're using Gang of assassins potting at us from behind roofs That's not plying the gime why don't they come into the open and fight fair?

Fluther [unable to stand the slight, facing SERGEANT] Fight fair! A few hundhred scrawls o' chaps with a couple o' guns an' Rosary beads, agam' a hundhred thousand thrained men with horse, fut an' artillery

... [To others in room] An' he wants us to fight fair! [To SERGEANT] D'ye want us to come out in our skins an' throw stones?

Sergeant Tinley [to CORPORAL] Are these four all that are 'ere?

Corporal Stoddart Four, that's hall, Sergeant

Sergeant Tinley [roughly] Come on, then, get the blighters aht [To the men] 'Ere, 'op it aht! Aht into the street with you, an' if another of our men goes west, you go with 'im [He catches FLUTHER by the arm] Go on, git aht!

Fluther [pulling himself free] Eh, who are you chuckin', eh?

Sergeant Tinley [roughly] Go on, git aht, you blighter

Fluther [truculently] Who're you callin' a blighter to, eh? I'm a Dublin man, born an' bred in th' City, see?

Sergeant Tinley Oh, I don't care if you were Bryan Buroo, git aht, git aht

Fluther [pausing as he reaches door R, to face the SERGEANT defiantly] Jasus, you an' your guns! Leave them down, an' I'd beat th' two of yous without sweatin'!

[Shepherded by the two soldiers, who follow them out, PETER, COVEY, FLUTHER and BRENNAN go out by door R]

[BESSIE is sleeping heavily on the chair by the fire After a pause NORA appears at door L, in her nightdress Remaining at door for a few moments she looks vaguely around the room She then comes in quietly, goes over to the fire, pokes it and puts the kettle on She thinks for a few moments, pressing her hand to her forehead She looks questioningly at the fire, and then at

the press at back She goes to the dresser L, back, opens drawer, takes out a soiled cloth and spreads it on the table She then places things for tea on the table]

Nora I imagine th' room looks very odd, somehow I was nearly forgetting Jack's tea Ah, I think I'll have everything done before he gets in [She lifts gently, as she arranges the table]

Th' violets were scenting th' woods, Nora, Displaying their charms to th' bee, When I first said I lov'd only you, Nora, An' you said you lov'd only me

Th' chestnut blooms gleam'd through th' glade, Nora,

A robin sang loud from a tree, When I first said I lov'd only you, Nora, An' you said you lov'd only me

[She pauses suddenly, and glances round the room]

[Doubtfully] I can't help feelin' this room very strange What is it? What is it? I must think I must thry to remember

Voices [chanting in a distant street] Ambu lance, Ambu lance! Red Cro ss, Red Cro ss!

Nora [startled and listening for a moment, then resuming the arrangement of the table]

Trees, birds an' bees sang a song, Nora, Of happier transports to be, When I first said I lov'd only you, Nora, An' you said you lov'd only me

[A burst of rifle-fire is heard in a street near by, followed by the rapid tok-tok-tok of a machine-gun]

[Staring in front of her and screaming] Jack, Jack, Jack! My baby, my baby, my baby!

Bessie [waking with a start] You divil, are you afther gettin' out o' bed again!

[She rises and runs towards NORA, who rushes to the window, back L, which she frantically opens]

Nora [at the window, screaming] Jack, Jack, for God's sake, come to me!

Soldiers [outside, shouting] Git away, git away from that window, there!

Bessie [seizing hold of NORA] Come



away, come away, woman, from that window!

*Nora [struggling with BESSIE]* Where is it, where have you hidden it? Oh, Jack, Jack, where are you?

*Bessie [imploringly]* Mrs Clitheroe, for God's sake, come away!

*Nora [fiercely]* I won't, he's below Let me . go! You're thryin' to keep me from me husband I'll follow him Jack, Jack, come to your Nora!

*Bessie* Hus-s-sh, Nora, Nora! He'll be here in a minute I'll bring him to you, if you'll only be quiet—honest to God, I will

*[With a great effort BESSIE pushes NORA away from the window, the force used causing her to stagger against it herself Two rifle-shots ring out in quick succession BESSIE jerks her body convulsively, stands stiffly upright for a moment, a look of agonized astonishment on her face, then she staggers forward, leaning heavily on the table with her hands]*

*[With an arrested scream of fear and pain]* Merciful God, I'm shot, I'm shot, I'm shot!

Th' life's pourin' out o' me! *[To NORA]* I've got this through through you . . through you, you bitch, you!

O God, have mercy on me! . *[To NORA]* You wouldn't stop quiet, no you wouldn't, you wouldn't, blast you! Look at what I'm afther gettin', look at what I'm afther gettin'

. I'm bleedin' to death, an' no one's here to stop th' flowin' blood! *[Calling]* Mrs Gogan, Mrs Gogan! Fluther, Fluther, for God's sake, somebody, a doctor, a doctor!

*[BESSIE, leaving R end of table, staggers down towards door R, but, weakening, she sinks down on her knees, R C, then reclining, she supports herself by her right hand resting on floor NORA is rigid with her back to wall, L, her trembling hands held out a little from her sides, her lips quivering, her breast heaving, staring wildly at the figure of BESSIE]*

*Nora [in a breathless whisper]* Jack, I'm frightened I'm frightened, Jack Oh, Jack, where are you?

*Bessie [moaningly]* This is what's afther comin' on me for nursin' you day an' night

I was a fool, a fool, a fool! Get me a dhrink o' wather, you jade, will you? There's a fire burnin' in me blood! *[Pleadingly]* Nora, Nora, dear, for God's sake,

run out an' get Mrs Gogan, or Fluther, or somebody to bring a doctor, quick, quick, quick! *[As NORA does not stir]* Blast you, stir yourself, before I'm gone!

*Nora* Oh, Jack, Jack, where are you?

*Bessie [in a whispered moan]* Jesus Christ, me sight's goin'! It's all dark, dark! Nora, hold me hand!

*[BESSIE's body lists over and she sinks into a prostrate position on the floor]*

I'm dyin', I'm dyin' . I feel it Oh

God, oh God! *[She feebly sings]*

I do believe . . . I will believe

That . . . Jesus . . . died . . . for . . . me,

That . . . on . . . the . . . cross He .

shed . . . His . . . blood

From sin . . . to . . . set . . . free

*[She ceases singing, and lies stretched*

*out, still and rigid A pause, then*

*MRS GOGAN runs hastily in by door R*

*She halts at door and looks round with a frightened air]*

*Mrs Gogan [quivering with fear]* Blessed be God, what's afther happenin'!

*[To NORA]* What's wrong, child, what's wrong? *[She sees BESSIE, runs to her and*

*bends over the body]* Bessie, Bessie! *[She*

*shakes the body]* Mrs Burgess, Mrs Bur-

*gess! [She feels BESSIE's forehead]* My

God, she's as cold as death They're afther

*murdherin' th' poor inoffensive woman!*

*[SERGEANT TINLEY and CORPORAL STOD-*

*DART, in agitation, enter by door R,*

*their rifles at the ready]*

*Sergeant Tinley [excitedly]* This is the

'ouse! *[They go rapidly to window, back,*

*c]* That's the window!

*Nora [pressing back against the wall]*

Hide it, hide it, cover it up, cover it up!

*[SERGEANT TINLEY, looking round room,*

*sees body He comes from window to*

*BESSIE, and bends over her]*

*Sergeant Tinley [bending over body]*

'Ere, wot's this? Oo's this? Oh, God,

we've plugged one of the women of the

'ouse!

*Corporal Stoddart [at window]* W'y the

'ell did she go to the window? Is she dead?

*Sergeant Tinley* Dead as bedamned

Well, we couldn't afford to take any chances

*[SERGEANT TINLEY goes back to window,*

*and looks out]*

*Nora [screaming, and putting her hands*

*before her face]* Hide it, hide it, don't let

me see it! Take me away, take me away,

*Mrs Gogan!*

[Mrs GOGAN, who has been weeping softly over BESSIE, rises, and crosses by front of table to room, L, goes in and comes out with a sheet in her hands. She crosses over and spreads the sheet over BESSIE'S body]

Mrs GOGAN [as she spreads the sheet] Oh, God help her th' poor woman she's stiffenin' out as hard as she can! Her face has written on it th' shock o' sudden agony, an' her hands is whitenin' into th' smooth shininess of wax.

NORA [whimperingly] Take me away, take me away, don't leave me here to be lookin' an' lookin' at it!

Mrs GOGAN [going over to NORA and putting her arm round her] Come on with me, dear, an' you can doze in poor Mollie's bed, till we gather some neighbours to come an' give th' last friendly touches to Bessie in th' lonely lavin' of her out.

[Mrs GOGAN puts her arms round NORA, leads her across from L to R, and they both go slowly out by door R]

[CORPORAL STODDART comes from window to table, looks at tea-things on table, goes to fireplace, takes the teapot up in his hand]

Corporal Stoddart [over to TINGLEY, at window] Tea here, Sergeant, wot abicht a cup of scald?

Sergeant Tinley Pour it abicht, pour it abicht, Stoddart—I could scoff anything just now.

[CORPORAL STODDART pours out two cups of tea. SERGEANT TINGLEY comes from window to table, and sits on R end, CORPORAL STODDART sits on opposite end

of table, and they drink the tea. In the distance is heard a bitter burst of rifle and machine-gun fire, interspersed with the boom, boom of artillery. The glare in the sky seen through the window, back, flares into a fuller and a deeper red.]

Sergeant Tinley There goes the general attack on the POW-SH Office.

Voices [in a distant street] Ambulance Ambulance! Inceel Red Cross, Red Cross!

[The voices of soldiers at a barricade outside the house are heard singing]

They were summoned from the 'ill-side,  
They were called in from the glen,  
And the country found 'em ready  
At the stirring call for men.  
Let not tears add to their 'ardship,  
As the soldiers pass along,  
And although our cart is breaking,  
Make it sing this cheery song.

[SERGEANT TINGLEY and CORPORAL STODDART join in the chorus as they sip the tea]

Sergeant Tinley and Corporal Stoddart [singing]

Keep the 'ome fires burning,  
While your 'earts are yearning,  
Though your lads are far away,  
They dream of 'ome,  
There's a silver lining  
Through the dark cloud shining,  
Turn the dark cloud inside out,  
Till the boys come 'ome!

THE END





THE GREAT GOD BROWN

By EUGENE O'NEILL

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## EUGENE O'NEILL AND HIS PLAYS

EUGENE O'NEILL was born in the city of New York in 1888, the son of James O'Neill, the actor. For the first seven years of his life he went with his parents when they were on tour, then he attended various schools, spent a year at Princeton University, prospected for gold in Spanish Honduras, shipped as a sailor for several voyages across the Atlantic, went on tour with his father and did a bit of acting, worked as a reporter on a newspaper, and had a year with Professor Baker in his "47 Workshop" at Harvard. He was one of the founders of the Provincetown Playhouse in New York, and had many of his early plays produced there. *Beyond the Horizon*, his first long play, won the Pulitzer prize in 1920. Twice since then he has won the prize, with *Anna Christie* and *Strange Interlude*, and has gained an international reputation. At present he is unquestionably and by common consent the most important dramatist that America has yet produced, and he is the only one who has attained what may be called world status. His plays have been produced in almost every theatre capital in Europe.

O'Neill's twenty-two long plays and sixteen plays in one act—a product that shows him to be an extremely prolific dramatist—are of various kinds. *Desire under the Elms*, for instance, and half a dozen others, are, judged by their surfaces, naturalistic, but all of them attempt to get below the surface to the springs of motive, and some of them, such as *Anna Christie*, are impregnated with symbolism. Others, again, such as *The Great God Brown*, *The Hairy Ape*, and *Dynamo* may be termed expressionistic, for their point of view is utterly antipodal to that of naturalism, and they employ technical devices either identical with or strongly akin to those of expressionism. *The Fountain* is a poetic romance. *Lazarus*, based on the biblical story, is an exposition of a philosophic idea and is of great beauty and power. *Marco Millions* is largely a bitter satire on the commercial view of life. Through all this wide variety of matter and form, with its considerable variety of style, the tone (except for that in *Marco Millions*) is almost altogether serious, and is often tragic. O'Neill seems but little interested in comedy, *Ah Wilderness!* in 1933 being his only wholly comic play.

Few dramatists have so freely and so fruitfully experimented in form. From the first, O'Neill sought a medium more expressive than the conventional. He is original in so far as he actually has worked out his own technique, but, as he himself states, he is deeply indebted to Strindberg, both for inspiration and for example, and he also owes something to the German expressionists. He soon mastered conventional technique, became dissatisfied with it, and began those daring experiments illustrated by *The Great God Brown* and *Strange Interlude*. In most cases, his daring has been justified by its results.

O'Neill's characters are usually uncertain personalities, under the sway of grim obsessions, at war with themselves, and seeking, perhaps unconsciously, freedom and the light. His style is generally simple and appropriate, is especially good in the use of various dialects, and is always effective when his characters express themselves naturally. When he grows rhapsodical and would-be poetic, he is unsure and often banal. Dramatically, he is strongest when he shows his characters in the grip of powerful emotions. He is weakest when he becomes self-conscious and labors to express an idea. Always, however, he is himself, uncompromising in the integrity of his art. He will be taken on his own terms or not at all.

*The Great God Brown*, in both matter and technique, is characteristic of O'Neill. It is a difficult play, with its values none too obvious, and for that reason is to many a person not only puzzling but irritating. But the search for its meanings is justified by their richness once they are discovered. It is a bitter satire on maternalism, as embodied in William Brown, an analysis of a soul in whom the pagan and the Christian ascetic struggle for mastery, whose very name, compounded of Dionysus and St. Anthony, indicates the nature of the war within him, and a symbolic rendering of the truth that no human being is ever known as he really is except to Cybele, the earth mother, who begot him. The fine values of the play, perhaps somewhat clouded in the reading, appear strikingly on the stage, though even there some of the symbolism is none too clear.

*The Great God Brown* was first produced in New York, on January 23, 1926. It was produced in London on June 19, 1927.

## CHARACTERS

WILLIAM A BROWN  
HIS FATHER, *a contractor*  
HIS MOTHER  
DION ANTHONY  
HIS FATHER, *a builder*  
HIS MOTHER  
MARGARET  
HER THREE SONS  
CYBEL  
TWO DRAFTSMEN } *in Brown's office*  
A STENOGRAPHER }

*The action takes place in an American city  
at the present day*

# THE GREAT GOD BROWN

## PROLOGUE

A cross section of the pier of the Casino In the rear, built out beyond the edge, is a rectangular space with benches on the three sides A rail encloses the entire wharf at the back.

It is a moonlight night in mid-June From the Casino comes the sound of the school quartet rendering "Sweet Adeline" with many ultra-sentimental barber-shop quavers There is a faint echo of the ensuing hand-clapping—then nothing but the lapping of ripples against the piles and their swishing on the beach—then footsteps on the boards, and BILLY BROWN walks along from the right with his MOTHER and FATHER The MOTHER is a dumpy woman of forty-five, overdressed in black lace and spangles The FATHER is fifty or more, the type of bustling, genial, successful, provincial business man, stout and hearty in his evening dress

BILLY BROWN is a handsome, tall, and athletic boy of nearly eighteen He is blond and blue-eyed, with a likable smile and a frank good-humored face, its expression already indicating a disciplined restraint His manner has the easy self-assurance of a normal intelligence He is in evening dress The three walk arm in arm, the MOTHER between

Mother [always addressing the FATHER] This Commencement dance is badly managed Such singing! Such poor voices! Why doesn't Billy sing?

Billy [to her] Mine is a regular fog horn! [He laughs]

Mother [to the air] I had a pretty voice, when I was a girl [To the FATHER, caustically] Did you see young Anthony strutting around the ballroom in dirty flannel pants?

Father He's just showing off

Mother Such impudence! He's as ignorant as his father

Father The old man's all right My only kick against him is he's been too damned conservative to let me branch out

Mother [bitterly] He has kept you down to his level—out of pure jealousy

Father But he took me into partnership, don't forget—

Mother [sharply] Because you were the brains! Because he was afraid of losing you! [There is a pause]

Billy [admiringly] Dion came in his old clothes on a bet with me He's a real sport He wouldn't have been afraid to appear in his pajamas [He grins with appreciation]

Mother Isn't the moonlight clear!

[She goes and sits on the center bench

BILLY stands at the left corner, forward, his hand on the rail, like a prisoner at the bar, facing the judge His FATHER stands in front of the bench on the right The MOTHER announces, with finality . . . ]

After he's through college, Billy must study for a profession of some sort—I'm determined on that! [She turns to her husband, defiantly, as if expecting opposition]

Father [eagerly and placatingly]. Just what I've been thinking, my dear Architecture! How's that? Billy a first-rate, number-one architect! That's my proposition! What I've always wished I could have been myself! Only I never had the opportunity But Billy—we'll make him a partner in the firm after Anthony, Brown and Son, architects and builders—instead of contractors and builders!

Mother [yearning for the realization of a dream] And we won't lay sidewalks—or dig sewers—ever again?

Father [a bit ruffled] I and Anthony can build anything your pet can draw—even if it's a church! [Selling his idea] It's a great chance for him! He'll design—expand us—make the firm famous

Mother [to the air—musingly] When you proposed, I thought your future promised success—my future . . . [With a sigh] Well, I suppose we've been comfortable Now, it's his future How would Billy like to be an architect? [She does not look at him]

Billy [to her] All right, Mother [Sheepishly] I guess I've never bothered much about what I'd like to do after college—

but architecture sounds all right to me, I guess

*Mother [to the air—proudly]* Billy used to draw houses when he was little

*Father [jubilantly]* Billy's got the stuff in him to win, if he'll only work hard enough

*Billy [dutifully]* I'll work hard, Dad

*Mother* Billy can do anything!

*Billy [embarrassed]* I'll try, Mother

*[There is a pause]*

*Mother [with a sudden shiver]* The nights are so much colder than they used to be! Think of it, I once went moonlight bathing in June when I was a girl—but the moonlight was so warm and beautiful in those days, do you remember, Father?

*Father [putting his arm around her affectionately]* You bet I do, Mother

*[He kisses her The orchestra at the Casino strikes up a waltz]*

There's the music Let's go back and watch the young folks dance

*[They start off, leaving BILLY standing there]*

*Mother [suddenly calling back over her shoulder]* I want to watch Billy dance

*Billy [dutifully]* Yes, Mother! *[He follows them]*

*[For a moment the faint sound of the music and the lapping of waves is heard Then footsteps again, and the three ANTHONYS come in First come the FATHER and MOTHER, who are not masked The FATHER is a tall, lean man of fifty-five or sixty with a grim, defensive face, obstinate to the point of stupid weakness The MOTHER is a thin, frail, faded woman, her manner perpetually nervous and distraught, but with a sweet and gentle face that had once been beautiful The FATHER wears an ill-fitting black suit, like a mourner The MOTHER wears a cheap, plain, black dress Following them, as if he were a stranger, walking alone, is their son, DION He is about the same height as young BROWN but lean and wiry, without repose, continually in restless nervous movement His face is masked The mask is a fixed forcing of his own face—dark, spiritual, poetic, passionately super-sensitive, helplessly unprotected in its childlike, religious faith in life—into the expression of a*

*mocking, reckless, defiant, gayly scoffing, and sensual young Pan He is dressed in a gray flannel shirt, open at the neck, sneakers over bare feet, and soiled white flannel trousers The FATHER strides to the center bench and sits down The MOTHER, who has been holding to his arm, lets go and stands by the bench at the right They both stare at DION, who, with a studied carelessness, takes his place at the rail, where young BROWN had stood They watch him, with queer, puzzled eyes]*

*Mother [suddenly—pleading]* You simply must send him to college!

*Father* I won't I don't believe in it Colleges turn out lazy loafers to sponge on their poor old fathers! Let him slave like I had to! That'll teach him the value of a dollar! College'll only make him a bigger fool than he is already! I never got above grammar school, but I've made money and established a sound business Let him make a man out of himself like I made of myself!

*Dion [mockingly—to the air].* This Mr Anthony is my father, but he only imagines he is God the Father.

*[They both stare at him]*

*Father [with angry bewilderment]* What—what—what's that?

*Mother [gently remonstrating to her son]* Dion, dear! *[To her husband—tauntingly]* Brown takes all the credit! He tells everyone the success is all due to his energy—that you're only an old stick-in-the-mud

*Father [stung, harshly]* The damn fool! He knows better'n anyone if I hadn't held him down to common sense, with his crazy wild-cat notions, he'd have had us ruined long ago!

*Mother.* He's sending Billy to college—Mrs Brown just told me—going to have him study architecture afterwards, too, so's he can help expand your firm!

*Father [angrily]* What's that? *[He suddenly turns on DION furiously]* Then you can make up your mind to go, too! And you'll learn to be a better architect than Brown's boy or I'll turn you out in the gutter without a penny! You hear?

*Dion [mockingly—to the air]* It's difficult to choose—but architecture sounds less laborious

*Mother [fondly]* You ought to make a

wonderful architect, Dion You've always painted pictures so well—

Dion *[with a start—resentfully]* Why must she lie? Is it my fault? She knows I only try to paint *[Passionately]* But I will, some day! *[Quickly, mocking again]* On to college! Well, it won't be home, anyway, will it?

*[He laughs queerly and approaches them His FATHER gets up defensively DION bows to him]*

I thank Mr Anthony for this splendid opportunity to create myself—

*[He kisses his MOTHER, who bows with a strange humility as if she were a servant being saluted by the young master—then adds lightly .]*

in my mother's image, so she may feel her life comfortably concluded

*[He sits in his FATHER's place and his mask stares with a frozen mockery before him They stand on each side, looking dumbly at him]*

Mother *[at last, with a shiver]* It's cold June didn't use to be cold I remember the June when I was carrying you, Dion—three months before you were born *[She stares up at the sky]* The moonlight was warm, then I could feel the night wrapped around me like a gray velvet gown lined with warm sky and trimmed with silver leaves!

Father *[gruffly—but with a certain awe]* My mother used to believe the full of the moon was the time to sow She was terrible old-fashioned *[With a grunt]* I can feel it's bringing on my rheumatism Let's go back indoors

Dion *[with intense bitterness]* Hide! Be ashamed!

*[They both start and stare at him]*

Father *[with bitter hopelessness, to his wife—indicating their son]* Who is he? You bore him!

Mother *[proudly]* He's my boy! He's Dion!

Dion *[bitterly resentful]* What else, indeed! The identical son! *[Mockingly]* Are Mr Anthony and his wife going in to dance? The nights grow cold! The days are dimmer than they used to be! Let's play hide-and-seek! Seek the monkey in the moon!

*[He suddenly cuts a grotesque caper, like a harlequin, and darts off, laughing with forced abandon They stare after him—then slowly follow]*

*[Again there is silence except for the sound of the lapping waves Then MARGARET comes in, followed by the humbly worshipping BILLY BROWN She is almost seventeen, pretty and vivacious, blonde, with big romantic eyes, her figure lithe and strong, her facial expression intelligent but youthfully dreamy, especially now in the moonlight She is in a simple white dress On her entrance, her face is masked with an exact, almost transparent reproduction of her own features, but giving her the abstract quality of a Girl instead of the individual, MARGARET]*

Margaret *[looking upward at the moon and singing in a low tone as they enter]* "Ah, moon of my delight that knowest no wane!"

Billy *[eagerly]* I've got that record—John McCormack It's a peach! Sing some more

*[She looks upward in silence He keeps standing respectfully in back of her, glancing embarrassedly toward her averted face He tries to make conversation]*

I think the *Rubáyát's* great stuff, don't you? I never could memorize poetry worth a darn Dion can recite lots of Shelley's poems by heart

Margaret *[slowly taking off her mask—to the moon]* Dion! *[There is a pause]*

Billy *[fidgeting]* Margaret!

Margaret *[to the moon]* Dion is so wonderful!

Billy *[blunderingly]* I asked you to come out here because I wanted to tell you something

Margaret *[to the moon]* Why did Dion look at me like that? It made me feel so crazy!

Billy I wanted to ask you something, too

Margaret That one time he kissed me—I can't forget it! He was only joking—but I felt—and he saw and just laughed!

Billy Because that's the uncertain part My end of it is a sure thing, and has been for a long time, and I guess everybody in town knows it—they're always kidding me—so it's a cinch you must know—how I feel about you

Margaret Dion's so different from all the others He can paint beautifully and write poetry, and he plays and sings and dances



so marvelously But he's sad and shy, too, just like a baby sometimes, and he understands what I'm really like inside—and—and I'd love to run my fingers through his hair—and I love him! Yes, I love him! *[She stretches out her arms to the moon]* Oh, Dion, I love you!

*Billy* I love you, Margaret.

*Margaret* I wonder if Dion—I saw him looking at me again tonight . . . Oh, I wonder . . . !

*Billy [taking her hand and blurting out]* Can't you love me? Won't you marry me—after college . . .

*Margaret* Where is Dion now, I wonder?

*Billy [shaking her hand in an agony of uncertainty]* Margaret! Please answer me!

*[MARGARET, her dream broken, puts on her mask, and turns to him]*

*Margaret [matter-of-factly]* It's getting chilly Let's go back and dance, Billy

*Billy [desperately]* I love you! *[He tries clumsily to kiss her]*

*Margaret [with an amused laugh]* Like a brother! You can kiss me if you like *[She kisses him]* A big-brother kiss It doesn't count

*[He steps back crushed, with head bowed She turns away and takes off her mask—to the moon]*

I wish Dion would kiss me again!

*Billy [painfully]* I'm a poor boob I ought to know better I'll bet I know. You're in love with Dion I've seen you look at him Isn't that it?

*Margaret* Dion! I love the sound of it!

*Billy [hushily]* Well—he's always been my best friend—I'm glad it's him—and I guess I know how to lose— *[He takes her hand and shakes it]* so here's wishing you all the success and happiness in the world, Margaret—and remember I'll always be your best friend! *[He gives her hand a final shake—swallows hard—then speaks manfully]* Let's go back in!

*Margaret [to the moon—faintly annoyed]* What is Billy Brown doing here? I'll go down to the end of the dock and wait Dion is the moon and I'm the sea I want to feel the moon kissing the sea I want Dion to leave the sky to me I want the tides of my blood to leave my heart and follow him! *[She whispers like a little girl]* Dion! Margaret! Peggy! Peggy is Dion's girl—Peggy is Dion's little girl . . . *[She*

*sings laughingly, elfishly]* Dion is my Daddy-O!

*[She is walking toward the end of the dock BILLY has turned away]*

*Billy* I'm going I'll tell Dion you're here

*[MARGARET now speaks to herself more and more strongly and assertively, until at the end she is a wife and mother]*

*Margaret* And I'll be Mrs Dion—Dion's wife—and he'll be my Dion—my own Dion—my little boy—my baby! The moon is drowned in the tides of my heart, and peace sinks deep through the sea!

*[She disappears, her upturned unmasked face like that of a rapturous visionary There is silence again, in which the dance music is heard Then this stops, and DION comes in He walks quickly to the bench and throws himself on it, hiding his masked face in his hands After a moment, he lifts his head, peers about, listens huntedly, then slowly takes off his mask His real face is revealed in the bright moonlight, shrinking, shy and gentle, full of deep sadness]*

*Dion [with a suffering bewilderment]* Why am I afraid to dance, I who love music and rhythm and grace and song and laughter? Why am I afraid to live, I who love life and the beauty of flesh and the living colors of earth and sky and sea? Why am I afraid of love, I who love love? Why am I afraid, I who am not afraid? Why must I pretend to scorn in order to pity? Why must I hide myself in self-contempt in order to understand? Why must I be so ashamed of my strength, so proud of my weakness? Why must I live in a cage like a criminal, defying and hating, I who love peace and friendship? *[Clasping his hands above in supplication]* Why was I born without a skin, O God, that I must wear armor in order to touch, or to be touched?

*[A second's pause of waiting silence—then he suddenly claps his mask over his face again, with a gesture of despair, and his voice becomes bitter and sardonic]*

Or rather, Old Graybeard, why the devil was I ever born at all?

*[Steps are heard from the right DION stiffens, and his mask stares straight ahead BILLY comes in from the right*

*He is shuffling along disconsolately When he sees DION, he stops abruptly and glowers resentfully—but at once the "good loser" in him conquers this!*

Billy [embarrassedly] Hello, Dion I've been looking all over for you [*He sits down on the bench at the right, forcing a joking tone*] What are you sitting here for, you nut—trying to get more moonstruck? [*After a pause—awkwardly*] I just left Margaret—

Dion [*giving a start—immediately defensively mocking*]. Bless you, my children!

Billy [*gruffly and slangily*] I'm out of it—she gave me the gate You're the original white-haired boy Go on in and win! We've been chums ever since we were kids, haven't we?—and—I'm glad it's you, Dion [*This huskily—he fumbles for DION's hand and gives it a shake*]

Dion [*letting his hand fall back—bitterly*] Chums? Oh no, Billy Brown would despise me!

Billy She's waiting for you now, down at the end of the dock

Dion For me? Which? Who? Oh, no, girls only allow themselves to look at what is seen!

Billy She's in love with you.

[*DION is moved There is a pause*]

Dion [*stammering*] Miracle? I'm afraid [*He chants flippantly*] I love, thou lovest, she loves! She loves, she loves—what?

Billy And I know damn well, underneath your nuttiness, you're gone on her

Dion [*moved*] Underneath? I love love! I'd love to be loved! But I'm afraid! [*Aggressively*] Was afraid! Not now! Now I can make love—to anyone! Yes, I love Peggy! Why not? Who is she? Who am I? We love, you love, they love, one loves! No one loves! All the world loves a lover, God loves us all and we love Him! Love is a word—a shameless ragged ghost of a word—begging at all doors for life at any price!

Billy [*always as if he hadn't listened to what the other said*] Say, let's you and me room together at college—

Dion Billy wants to remain by her side!

Billy It's a bet, then! [*Forcing a grin*] You can tell her I'll see that you behave! [*He turns away*] So long Remember she's waiting [*He goes*]

Dion [*dazedly, to himself*] Waiting—waiting for me! [*He slowly removes his*

*mask His face is torn and transfigured by joy He stares at the sky raptly*] O God in the moon, did you hear? She loves me! I am not afraid! I am strong! I can love! She protects me! Her arms are softly around me! She is warmly around me! She is my skin! She is my armor! Now I am born—I—the I!—one and indivisible—I who love Margaret! [*He glances at his mask triumphantly—in tones of deliverance*] You are outgrown! I am beyond you! [*He stretches out his arms to the sky*] O God, now I believe!

[*From the end of the wharf, MARGARET's voice is heard*]

Margaret Dion!

Dion [*raptly*] Margaret!

Margaret [*nearer*] Dion!

Dion Margaret!

Margaret Dion!

[*She comes running in, her mask in her hands He springs toward her with outstretched arms, but she shrinks away with a frightened shriek and hastily puts on her mask DION starts back She speaks coldly and angrily*]

Who are you? Why are you calling me? I don't know you!

Dion [*heart-brokenly*] I love you!

Margaret [*freezingly*] Is this a joke—or are you drunk?

Dion [*with a final pleading whisper*] Margaret!

[*But she only glares at him contemptuously Then with a sudden gesture he claps his mask on and laughs wildly and bitterly*]

Ha-ha-ha! That's one on you, Peg!

Margaret [*with delight, pulling off her mask*] Dion! How did you ever—why, I never knew you!

Dion [*putting his arm around her boldly*] How? It's the moon—the crazy moon—the monkey in the moon—playing jokes on us! [*He kisses her with his masked face with a romantic actor's passion again and again*] You love me! You know you do! Say it! Tell me! I want to hear! I want to feel! I want to know! I want to want! To want you as you want me!

Margaret [*in ecstasy*] Oh, Dion, I do! I do love you!

Dion [*with ironic mastery—rhetorically*] And I love you! Oh, madly! Oh, forever and ever, amen! You are my evening star

and all my Pleiades! Your eyes are blue pools in which gold dreams glide, your body is a young white birch leaning backward beneath the lips of spring So! [*He has bent her back, his arms supporting her, his face above hers*] So! [*He kisses her*]

Margaret [*with overpowering passionate languor*] Oh, Dion! Dion! I love you!

Dion [*with more and more mastery in his tone*] I love, you love, we love! Come! Rest! Relax! Let go your clutch on the world! Dim and dimmer! Fading out in the past behind! Gone! Death! Now! Be born! Awake! Live! Dissolve into dew—into silence—into night—into earth—into space—into peace—into meaning—into joy—into God—into the Great God Pan!

[*While he has been speaking, the moon has passed gradually behind a black cloud, its light fading out. There is a moment of intense blackness and silence. Then the light gradually comes on again. DION's voice, at first in a whisper, then increasing in volume with the light, is heard*]

Wake up! Time to get up! Time to exist! Time for school! Time to learn! Learn to pretend! Cover your nakedness! Learn to lie! Learn to keep step! Join the procession! Great Pan is dead! Be ashamed!

Margaret [*with a sob*] Oh, Dion, I am ashamed!

Dion [*mockingly*] Sssshh! Watch the monkey in the moon! See him dance! His tail is a piece of string that was left when he broke loose from Jehovah and ran away to join Charley Darwin's circus!

Margaret I know you must hate me now! [*She throws her arms around him and hides her head on his shoulder*]

Dion [*deeply moved*] Don't cry! Don't—! [*He suddenly tears off his mask—in a passionate agony*] Hate you? I love you with all my soul! Love me! Why can't you love me, Margaret?

[*He tries to kiss her, but she jumps to her feet with a frightened cry, holding up her mask before her face protectingly*]

Margaret Don't! Please! I don't know you! You frighten me!

Dion [*putting on his mask again—quietly and bitterly*] All's well I'll never let you see again [*He puts his arm around her—gently mocking*] By proxy, I love you There! Don't cry! Don't be afraid! Dion

Anthony will marry you some day [*He kisses her*] "I take this woman" [*Tenderly joking*] Hello, woman! Do you feel older by æons? Mrs Dion Anthony, shall we go in, and may I have the next dance?

Margaret [*tenderly*] You crazy child! [*Then, laughing with joy*] Mrs Dion Anthony! It sounds wonderful, doesn't it?

[*They go out*]

## ACT ONE

### SCENE ONE

Seven years later

The sitting room of MRS DION ANTHONY's half of a two-family house in the homes section of the town—one of those one-design districts that daze the eye with multiplied ugliness. The four pieces of furniture shown are in keeping—an armchair at left, a table with a chair in back of it at center, a sofa at right. The same courtroom effect of the arrangement of benches in Act One is held to here. The background is a backdrop on which the rear wall is painted with the intolerable lifeless realistic detail of the stereotyped paintings which usually adorn the sitting rooms of such houses. It is late afternoon of a gray day in winter.

DION is sitting behind the table, staring before him. The mask hangs on his breast below his neck, giving the effect of two faces. His real face has aged greatly, grown more strained and tortured, but at the same time, in some queer way, more selfless and ascetic, more fixed in its resolute withdrawal from life. The mask, too, has changed. It is older, more defiant and mocking, its sneer more forced and bitter, its Pan quality becoming Mephistophelean. It has already begun to show the ravages of dissipation.

DION suddenly reaches out and takes up a copy of the New Testament which is on the table and, putting a finger in at random, opens and reads aloud the text at which it points.

Dion "Come unto me all ye who are heavy laden and I will give you rest" [*He stares before him in a sort of trance, his face lighted up from within but painfully confused—in an uncertain whisper*] I will come—but where are you, Savior?

[The noise of the outer door shutting is heard DION starts and claps the mocking mask on his face again He tosses the Testament aside contemptuously]

Blah! Fixation on old Mama Christianity! You infant blubbing in the dark, you!

[He laughs, with a bitter self-contempt Footsteps approach He picks up a newspaper and hides behind it hurriedly MARGARET enters She is dressed in stylish, expensive clothes and a fur coat, which look as if they had been remodeled and seen service She has grown mature and maternal, in spite of her youth Her pretty face is still fresh and healthy, but there is the beginning of a permanently worried, apprehensive expression about the nose and mouth—an uncomprehending hurt in her eyes DION pretends to be engrossed in his paper She bends down and kisses him]

Margaret [with a forced gaiety] Good morning—at four in the afternoon! You were snoring when I left!

Dion [putting his arms around her with a negligent, accustomed gesture—mockingly] The Ideal Husband!

[MARGARET, already preoccupied with another thought, comes and sits in the chair on the left]

Margaret I was afraid the children would disturb you, so I took them over to Mrs Young's to play.

[There is a pause DION picks up the paper again MARGARET asks anxiously . . .]

I suppose they'll be all right over there, don't you?

[He doesn't answer She is more hurt than offended]

I wish you'd try to take more interest in the children, Dion

Dion [mockingly] Become a father—before breakfast? I'm in too delicate a condition

[She turns away, hurt Penitently he pats her hand—vaguely]

All right I'll try

Margaret [squeezing his hand—with possessive tenderness] Play with them You're a bigger kid than they are—underneath

Dion [self-mockingly—flipping the Bible] Underneath—I'm becoming downright infantile! "Suffer these little ones!"

Margaret [keeping to her certainty] You're my oldest

Dion [with mocking appreciation] She puts the Kingdom of Heaven in its place!

Margaret [withdrawing her hand] I was serious

Dion So was I—about something or other. [He laughs] This domestic diplomacy! We communicate in code—when neither has the other's key!

[MARGARET frowns confusedly, then forces a playful tone]

Margaret I want to have a serious talk with you, young man. In spite of your promises, you've kept up the hard drinking and gambling you started the last year abroad

Dion From the time I realized it wasn't in me to be an artist—except in living—and not even in that! [He laughs bitterly]

Margaret [with conviction] But you can paint, Dion—beautifully!

Dion [with deep pain] No! [He suddenly takes her hand and kisses it gratefully] I love Margaret! Her blindness surpasseth all understanding! [Bitterly] Or is it pity?

Margaret We've only got about one hundred dollars left in the bank

Dion [with dazed surprise] What! Is all the money from the sale of the house gone?

Margaret [wearily] Every day or so you've been cashing checks You've been drinking—you haven't counted—

Dion [irritably] I know! [After a pause—soberly] No more estate to fall back on, eh? Well, for five years it kept us living abroad in peace It bought us a little happiness—of a kind—didn't it?—living and loving and having children—[After a slight pause—bitterly]—thinking one was creating before one discovered one couldn't!

Margaret [this time with forced conviction] But you can paint—beautifully!

Dion [angrily] Shut up! [After a pause—jeeringly] So my wife thinks it behooves me to settle down and support my family in the meager style to which they'll have to become accustomed?

Margaret [shamefacedly] I didn't say—still—something's got to be done

Dion [harshly] Will Mrs Anthony helpfully suggest what?

Margaret I met Billy Brown on the street He said you'd have made a good architect, if you'd stuck to it

*Dion* Flatterer! Instead of leaving college when my Old Man died? Instead of marrying Peggy and going abroad and being happy?

*Margaret* [as if she hadn't heard] He spoke of how well you used to draw

*Dion* Billy was in love with Margaret at one time

*Margaret* He wanted to know why you've never been in to see him

*Dion* He's bound heaven-bent for success It's the will of Mammon! Anthony and Brown, contractors and builders—death subtracts Anthony, and I sell out—Billy graduates—Brown and Son, architects and builders—old man Brown perishes of paternal pride—and now we have William A. Brown, architect! Why his career itself already has an architectural design! One of God's mud pies!

*Margaret* He particularly told me to ask you to drop in

*Dion* [springing to his feet—assertively] No! Pride! I have been alive!

*Margaret* Why don't you have a talk with him?

*Dion* Pride in my failure!

*Margaret* You were always such close friends

*Dion* [more and more desperately] The pride which came after man's fall—by which he laughs as a creator at his self-defeats!

*Margaret* Not for my sake—but for your own—and, above all, for the children's!

*Dion* [with terrible despair] Pride! Pride without which the Gods are worms!

*Margaret* [after a pause, meekly and humbly] You don't want to? It would hurt you? All right, dear Never mind We'll manage somehow—you mustn't worry—you must start your beautiful painting again—and I can get that position in the library—it would be such fun for me working there! [She reaches out and takes his hand—tenderly] I love you, dear I understand

[DION slumps down into his chair, crushed, his face averted from hers, as hers is from him, although their hands are still clasped He speaks in a trembling, expiring voice]

*Dion* Pride is dying! [As if he were suffocating, he pulls the mask from his resigned, pale, suffering face He prays like a Saint in the desert, exorcizing a demon] Pride

is dead! Blessed are the meek! Blessed are the poor in spirit!

*Margaret* [without looking at him—in a comforting, motherly tone] My poor boy!

*Dion* [resentfully—clapping on his mask again and springing to his feet—derisively] Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit graves! Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they are blind! [With tortured bitterness] All right! Then I ask my wife to go and ask Billy Brown—that's more deadly than if I went myself! [With wild mockery] Ask him if he can't find an opening for a talented young man who is only honest when he isn't sober—implore him, beg him in the name of old love, old friendship—to be a generous hero and save the woman and her children! [He laughs with a sort of diabolical, ironical glee now, and starts to go out]

*Margaret* [meekly]. Are you going up street, Dion?

*Dion* Yes

*Margaret* Will you stop at the butchers' and have them send two pounds of pork chops?

*Dion* Yes

*Margaret* And stop at Mrs. Young's and ask the children to hurry right home?

*Dion* Yes

*Margaret* Will you be back for dinner, Dion?

*Dion*. No

[He goes, the outer door slams MARGARET sighs with a tired incomprehension and goes to the window and stares out]

*Margaret* [worriedly] I hope they'll watch out, crossing the street

## SCENE TWO

BILLY BROWN'S Office, at five in the afternoon At the center is a fine mahogany desk with a swivel chair in back of it To the left of the desk is an office armchair To the right of the desk is an office lounge The background is a backdrop of an office wall, treated similarly to that of Scene One in its over-meticulous representation of detail

BILLY BROWN is seated at the desk, looking over a blue print by the light of a desk lamp He has grown into a fine-looking, well-dressed, capable, college-bred American

*business man, boyish still and with the same engaging personality*

*The telephone rings*

*Brown [answering the telephone] Yes? Who? [This in surprise—then with eager pleasure] Let her come right in*

*[He gets up and goes to the door, expectant and curious MARGARET enters Her face is concealed behind the mask of the pretty young matron, still hardly a woman, who cultivates a naïvely innocent and bravely hopeful attitude toward things and acknowledges no wound to the world She is dressed as in Scene One but with an added touch of effective primping here and there]*

*Margaret [very gayly] Hello, Billy Brown!*

*Brown [awkward in her presence, shaking her hand] Come in Sit down This is a pleasant surprise, Margaret*

*[She sits down on the lounge He sits in his chair behind the desk, as before]*

*Margaret [looking around] What lovely offices! My, but Billy Brown is getting grand!*

*Brown [pleased] I've just moved in The old place was too stuffy*

*Margaret It looks so prosperous—but then, Billy is doing so wonderfully well, everyone says*

*Brown [modestly] Well, to be frank, it's been mostly luck Things have come my way without my doing much about it [With an abashed pride] Still—I have done a little something myself [He picks the plan from the desk] See this? It's my design for the new Municipal Building It's just been accepted—provisionally—by the Committee*

*Margaret [taking the plan, speaking vaguely] Oh?*

*[She looks at the plan abstractedly*

*There is a pause She speaks suddenly] You mentioned the other day how well Dion used to draw*

*Brown [a bit stiffly] Yes, he certainly did [He takes the drawing from her and at once becomes interested and squints at it frowningly] Did you notice that anything seemed lacking in this?*

*Margaret [indifferently] Not at all*

*Brown [with a cheerful grin] The Committee want it made a little more American It's too much of a conventional Greco-*

*Roman tomb, they say [He laughs] They want an original touch of modern novelty stuck in to liven it up and make it look different from other town halls [Putting the drawing back on his desk] And I've been figuring out how to give it to them, but my mind doesn't seem to run that way Have you any suggestion?*

*Margaret [as if she hadn't heard] Dion certainly draws well, Billy Brown was saying?*

*Brown [trying not to show his annoyance] Why, yes—he did—and still can, I expect*

*[There is a pause He masters what he feels to be an unworthy pique and turns to her generously]*

*Dion would have made a cracking good architect*

*Margaret [proudly] I know He could be anything he wanted to*

*Brown [after a pause—embarrassedly] Is he working at anything these days?*

*Margaret [defensively] Oh, yes! He's painting wonderfully! But he's just like a child, he's so impractical He doesn't try to have an exhibition anywhere, or anything*

*Brown [surprised] The one time I ran into him, I thought he told me he'd destroyed all his pictures—that he'd gotten sick of painting and completely given it up*

*Margaret [quickly] He always tells people that He doesn't want anyone even to look at his things, imagine! He keeps saying they're rotten—when they're really too beautiful! He's too modest for his own good, don't you think? But it is true he hasn't done so much lately since we've been back You see, the children take up such a lot of his time He just worships them! I'm afraid he's becoming a hopeless family man, just the opposite of what anyone would expect who knew him in the old days*

*Brown [painfully embarrassed by her loyalty and his knowledge of the facts] Yes, I know [He coughs self-consciously]*

*Margaret [aroused by something in his manner] But I suppose the gossips are telling the same silly stories about him they always did [She forces a laugh] Poor Dion! Give a dog a bad name! [Her voice breaks a little in spite of herself]*

*Brown [hastily] I haven't heard any stories—[He stops uncertainly, then decides to plunge in] except about money matters*



*Margaret [forcing a laugh]* Oh, perhaps they're true enough Dion is such a generous fool with his money, like all artists

*Brown [with a certain doggedness]* There's a rumor that you've applied for a position at the Library

*Margaret [forcing a gay tone]* Yes, indeed! Won't it be fun! Maybe it'll improve my mind! And one of us has got to be practical, so why not me? *[She forces a gay, girlish laugh]*

*Brown [impulsively reaching out and taking her hand—awkwardly]* Listen, Margaret Let's be perfectly frank, will you? I'm such an old friend, and I want like the deuce to You know darn well I'd do anything in the world to help you—or Dion

*Margaret [withdrawing her hand, coldly]* I'm afraid I—don't understand, Billy Brown

*Brown [acutely embarrassed]* Well, I—I just meant—you know, if you needed

*[There is a pause He looks questioningly at her averted face, then ventures on another tack, speaking matter-of-factly]*

I've got a proposition to make to Dion—if I could ever get hold of him It's this way business has been piling up on me—a run of luck—but I'm short-handed I need a crack chief draftsman darn badly—or I'm liable to lose out Do you think Dion would consider it—as a temporary stop-gap—until he felt in the painting mood again?

*Margaret [striving to conceal her eagerness and relief—judicially]* Yes—I really do He's such a good sport, and Billy and he were such pals once I know he'd be only too tickled to help him out

*Brown [diffidently]* I thought he might be sensitive about working for—I mean, with me—when, if he hadn't sold out to Dad he'd be my partner now—*[earnestly]* and, by jingo, I wish he was! *[Abruptly]* Let's try to nail him down right away, Margaret Is he home now? *[He reaches for the phone]*

*Margaret [hurriedly]* No, he—he went out for a long walk

*Brown* Perhaps I can locate him later around town somewhere

*Margaret [with a note of pleading]* Please don't trouble It isn't necessary I'm sure when I talk to him—he's coming home to dinner *[Getting up]* Then it's all settled, isn't it? Dion will be so glad to

be able to help an old friend—he's so terribly loyal, and he's always liked Billy Brown so much! *[Holding out her hand]* I really must go now!

*Brown [shaking her hand]* Good-by, Margaret I hope you'll be dropping in on us a lot when Dion gets here

*Margaret* Yes *[She goes]*

*[Brown sits at his desk again, looking ahead in a not unsatisfying melancholy reverie]*

*Brown [muttering admiringly but pityingly]* Poor Margaret! She's such a game sport, but it's pretty damn tough on her! *[Indignantly]* By God, I'm going to give Dion a good talking-to one of these days!

### SCENE THREE

*Cybel's parlor* An automatic, nickel-in-the slot player-piano is at the center, rear On its right is a dirty gilt second-hand sofa At the left is a bald-spotted crimson plush chair The backdrop for the rear wall is cheap wall-paper of a dull yellow-brown, resembling a blurred impression of a fallow field in early spring There is a cheap alarm clock on top of the piano Beside it Cybel's mask is lying

DION is sprawled on his back, fast asleep on the sofa His mask has fallen down on his chest His pale face is singularly pure, spiritual, and sad

The player-piano is groggily banging out a sentimental medley of "Mother—Mammy" tunes

CYBEL is seated on the stool in front of the piano She is a strong, calm, sensual, blonde girl of twenty or so, her complexion fresh and healthy, her figure full-breasted and wide-hipped, her movements slow and solidly languorous like an animal's, her large eyes dreamy with the reflected stirring of profound instincts She chews gum like a sacred cow forgetting time with an eternal end Her eyes are fixed, incuriously, on DION's pale face CYBEL, as the tune runs out, glances at the clock, which indicates midnight, then goes slowly over to DION and puts her hand gently on his forehead

*Cybel* Wake up! *[DION stirs, sighs]*

*Dion [murmuring dreamily]* "And He laid his hands on them and healed them" *[With a start he opens his eyes and, half sitting up, stares at her bewilderedly]* What

—where—who are you? *[He reaches for his mask and claps it on defensively]*

Cybel *[placidly]* Only another female. You was camping on my steps, sound asleep. I didn't want to run any risk getting into more trouble with the cops pinching you there and blaming me, so I took you in to sleep it off.

Dion *[mockingly]* Blessed are the pitiful, Sister! I'm broke—but you will be rewarded in Heaven!

Cybel *[calmly]* I wasn't wasting my pity. Why should I? You were happy, weren't you?

Dion *[approvingly]* Excellent! You're not a moralist, I see.

Cybel *[going on]* And you look like a good boy, too—when you're asleep. Say, you better beat it home to bed or you'll be locked out.

Dion *[mockingly]* Now you're becoming maternal, Miss Earth. Is that the only answer—to pin my soul into every vacant diaper?

*[She stares down at his mask, her face growing hard. He laughs]*

But please don't stop stroking my aching brow. Your hand is a cool mud poultice on the sting of thought!

Cybel *[calmly]* Stop acting. I hate ham fats. *[She looks at him as if waiting for him to remove his mask—then turns her back indifferently and goes to the piano]* Well, if you simply got to be a regular devil like all the other visiting sports, I s'pose I got to play with you.

*[She takes her mask and puts it on—then turns. The mask is the rouged and eye-blackened countenance of the hardened prostitute. She now speaks in a coarse, harsh voice]*

Kindly state your dishonorable intentions, if any! I can't sit up all night keeping company! Let's have some music!

*[She puts a plug in the machine. The same sentimental medley begins to play. The two masks stare at each other. She laughs]*

Shoot! I'm all set! It's your play, Kid Lucifer!

*[Dion slowly removes his mask. Cybel stops the music with a jerk. Dion's face is gentle and sad]*

Dion *[humbly]* I'm sorry. It has always been such agony with me to be touched!

*[Cybel takes off her mask and comes back and sits down on the stool]*

Cybel *[sympathetically]* Poor kid! I've never had one, but I can guess. They hug and kiss you and take you on their laps and pinch you and want to see you getting dressed and undressed—as if they owned you. I bet you I'd never let them treat one of mine that way!

Dion *[turning to her]* You're lost in blind alleys, too. *[Suddenly holding out his hand to her]* But you're strong. Let's be friends.

Cybel *[with a strange sternness, searching his face]* And never nothing more?

Dion *[with a strange smile]* Let's say, never anything less!

*[She takes his hand. There is a ring at the outside door bell. Cybel and Dion stare at each other. There is another ring. Cybel puts on her mask. Dion does likewise]*

Cybel *[mockingly]* When you got to love to live, it's hard to love living. I better join the A. F. of L. and soap-box for the eight-hour night! Got a nickel, baby? Play a tune.

*[She goes out. Dion puts a nickel in. The same sentimental tune starts. Cybel returns, followed by Billy Brown. His face is rigidly composed, but his superior disgust for Dion can be seen. Dion jerks off the music, and he and Billy look at each other for a moment, Cybel watching them both—then, bored, she yawns]*

He's hunting for you. Put out the lights when you go. I'm going to sleep. *[She starts to go—then, as if reminded of something turns to Dion]* Life's all right, if you let it alone. *[Mechanically flashing a trade smile at Billy]* Now you know the way, Handsome, call again! *[She goes]*

Brown *[after an awkward pause]* Hello, Dion! I've been looking all over town for you. This place was the very last chance.

*[After another pause—embarrassedly]* Let's take a walk.

Dion *[mockingly]* I've given up exercise. They claim it lengthens your life.

Brown *[persuasively]* Come on, Dion, be a good fellow. You're certainly not staying here—

Dion. Billy would like to think me taken in *flagrante delicto*, eh?

Brown. Don't be a damn fool! Listen to



me! I've been looking you up for purely selfish reasons I need your help

*Dion [astonished]* What?

*Brown* I've a proposition to make that I hope you'll consider favorably out of old friendship To be frank, Dion, I need you to lend me a hand down at the office

*Dion [with a harsh laugh]* So it's a job, is it? Then my poor wife did a-begging go!

*Brown [repelled—sharply]* On the contrary, I had to beg her to beg you to take it! *[More angrily]* Look here, Dion! I won't listen to you talk that way about Margaret! And you wouldn't if you weren't drunk! *[Suddenly shaking him]* What in hell has come over you, anyway! You didn't use to be like this! What the devil are you going to do with yourself—sink into the gutter and drag Margaret with you? If you'd heard her defend you, lie about you, tell me how hard you were working, what beautiful things you were painting, how you stayed at home and idolized the children!—when everyone knows you've been out every night sousing and gambling away the last of your estate

*[He stops, ashamed, controlling himself]*

*Dion [wearily]* She was lying about her husband, not me, you fool! But it's no use explaining *[In a sudden, excitable passion]* What do you want? I agree to anything—except the humiliation of yelling secrets at the deaf!

*Brown [trying a bullying tone—roughly]* Bunk! Don't try to crawl out! There's no excuse, and you know it *[As Dion doesn't reply—penitently]* But I know I shouldn't talk this way, old man! It's only because we're such old pals—and I hate to see you wasting yourself—you who had more brains than any of us! But, damn it, I suppose you're too much of a rotten cynic to believe I mean what I've just said!

*Dion [touched]* I know Billy was always Dion Anthony's friend

*Brown* You're damn right I am—and I'd have proved it long ago if you'd only given me half a chance! After all, I couldn't keep chasing after you and be snubbed every time A man has some pride!

*Dion [bitterly mocking]* Dead wrong! Never more! None whatever! It's unmoral! Blessed are the poor in spirit, Brother! When shall I report?

*Brown [eagerly]* Then you'll take the—you'll help me?

*Dion [wearily bitter]* I'll take the job. One must do something to pass away the time, while one is waiting—for one's next incarnation

*Brown [jokingly]* I'd say it was a bit early to be worrying about that *[Trying to get Dion started]* Come along, now. It's pretty late

*Dion [shaking Brown's hand off his shoulder and walking away from him—after a pause]* Is my father's chair still there?

*Brown [turning away—embarrassed]* I—I don't really remember, Dion—I'll look it up

*Dion [taking off his mask—slowly]* I'd like to sit where he spun what I have spent What aliens we were to each other! When he lay dead, his face looked so familiar that I wondered where I had met that man before Only at the second of my conception After that, we grew hostile with concealed shame And my mother? I remember a sweet, strange girl, with affectionate, bewildered eyes as if God had locked her in a dark closet without any explanation I was the sole doll our ogre, her husband, allowed her, and she played mother and child with me for many years in that house until at last through two tears I watched her die with the shy pride of one who has lengthened her dress and put up her hair. And I felt like a forsaken toy and cried to be buried with her, because her hands alone had caressed without clawing She lived long and aged greatly in the two days before they closed her coffin The last time I looked, her purity had forgotten me, she was stainless and imperishable, and I knew my sobs were ugly and meaningless to her virginity, so I shrank away, back into life, with naked nerves jumping like fleas, and in due course of nature another girl called me her boy in the moon and married me and became three mothers in one person, while I got paint on my paws in an endeavor to see God! *[He laughs wildly—claps on his mask]* But that Ancient Humorist had given me weak eyes, so now I'll have to foreswear my quest for Him and go in for the Omnipresent Successful Serious One, the Great God Mr Brown, instead! *[He makes him a sweeping, mocking bow]*

*Brown [repelled but cajolingly]* Shut up, you nut! You're still drunk Come on! Let's

start! [He grabs DION by the arm and switches off the light]

Dion [from the darkness—mockingly] I am thy shorn, bald, nude sheep! Lead on, Almighty Brown, thou Kindly Light!

## ACT TWO

### SCENE ONE

CYBEL's parlor—about sunset in spring seven years later The arrangement of furniture is the same, but the chair and sofa are new, bright-colored, costly pieces The old automatic piano looks exactly the same The cheap alarm clock is still on top of it On either side of the clock, the masks of DION and CYBEL are lying The background backdrop is brilliant, stunning wall-paper, on which crimson and purple flowers and fruits tumble over one another in a riotously profane lack of any apparent design

DION sits in the chair on the left, CYBEL on the sofa A card-table is between them Both are playing solitaire DION is now prematurely gray His face is that of an ascetic, a martyr, furrowed by pain and self-torture, yet lighted from within by a spiritual calm and human kindness

CYBEL has grown stouter and more voluptuous, but her face is still unmarked and fresh, her calm more profound She is like an unmoved idol of Mother Earth

The piano is whining out its same old sentimental medley They play their cards intently and contentedly The music stops

Cybel [musingly] I love those rotten old sob tunes They make me wise to people That's what's inside them—what makes them love and murder their neighbor—crying jags set to music!

Dion [compassionately] Every song is a hymn They keep trying to find the Word in the Beginning

Cybel They try to know too much It makes them weak I never puzzled them with myself I gave them a Tart They understood her and knew their parts and acted naturally And on both sides we were able to keep our real virtue, if you get me [She plays her last card—indifferently] I've made it again

Dion [smiling] Your luck is uncanny It never comes out for me

Cybel You keep getting closer, but it knows you still want to win—a little bit—and it's wise all I care about is playing [She lays out another game] Speaking of my canned music, our Mr Brown hates that old box

[At the mention of BROWN, DION trembles as if suddenly possessed, has a terrible struggle with himself, then while she continues to speak, gets up like an automaton and puts on his mask The mask is now terribly ravaged. All of its Pan quality has changed into a diabolical Mephistophelean cruelty and irony]

He doesn't mind the music inside That gets him somehow But he thinks the case looks shabby, and he wants it junked But I told him that just because he's been keeping me so long, he needn't start bossing like a husband or I'll— [She looks up and sees the masked DION standing by the piano—calmly] hello! Getting jealous again?

Dion [jeeringly] Are you falling in love with your keeper, old Sacred Cow?

Cybel [without taking offense] Cut it! You've been asking me that for years Be yourself! He's healthy and handsome—but he's too guilty What makes you pretend you think love is so important, anyway? It's just one of a lot of things you do to keep life living

Dion [in the same tone] Then you've lied when you've said you loved me, have you, Old Filth?

Cybel [affectionately] You'll never grow up! We've been friends, haven't we, for seven years? I've never let myself want you nor you me Yes, I love you It takes all kinds of love to make a world! Ours is the living cream, I say, living rich and high! [After a pause—coaxingly] Stop hiding I know you

[DION, taking off his mask, wearily comes and sits down at her feet and lays his head in her lap—with a grateful smile]

Dion You're strong You always give You've given my weakness strength to live

Cybel [tenderly, stroking his hair maternally] You're not weak You were born with ghosts in your eyes, and you were brave enough to go looking into your own dark—and you got afraid [After a pause] I don't blame your being jealous of Mr

Brown sometimes I'm jealous of your wife, even though I know you do love her

*Dion [slowly]* I love Margaret I don't know who my wife is

*Cybel [after a pause—with a queer broken laugh]* Oh, God, sometimes the truth hits me such a sock between the eyes I can see the stars!—and then I'm so damn sorry for the lot of you, every damn mother's son-of-a-gun of you, that I'd like to run out naked into the street and love the whole mob to death like I was bringing you all a new brand of dope that'd make you forget everything that ever was for good! *[With a twisted smile]* But they wouldn't see me, any more than they see each other And they keep right on moving along and dying without my help, anyway

*Dion [sadly]* You've given me strength to die

*Cybel* You may be important, but your life's not There's millions of it born every second Life can cost too much even for a sucker to afford it—like everything else And it's not sacred—only the you inside is The rest is earth

*[DION gets to his knees and with clasped hands looks up raptly and prays with an ascetic fervor]*

*Dion* "Into thy hands, O Lord," *[Suddenly, with a look of horror]* Nothing! To feel one's life blown out like the flame of a cheap match ! *[He claps on his mask and laughs harshly]* To fall asleep and know you'll never be called to get on the job of existence again! "Swift be thine approaching flight! Come soon—soon!" *[He quotes this last with a mocking longing]*

*Cybel [patting his head maternally]* There, don't be scared It's born in the blood When the time comes, you'll find it's easy

*Dion [jumping to his feet and walking about excitedly]* It won't be long My wife dragged in a doctor the day before yesterday He says my heart is gone—booze He warned me, never another drop or *[Mockingly]* What say? Shall we have a drink?

*Cybel [like an idol]* Suit yourself It's in the pantry *[As he hesitates]* What set you off on this bat? You were raving on about some cathedral plans

*Dion [wildly mocking]* They've been accepted—Mr Brown's designs! My designs

really! You don't need to be told that He hands me one mathematically correct barn after another, and I doctor them up with cute allurements so that fools will desire to buy, sell, breed, sleep, love, hate, curse, and pray in them! I do this with devilish cleverness to their entire delight! Once I dreamed of painting wind on the sea and the skimming flight of cloud shadows over the tops of trees! Now *[He laughs]* But pride is a sin—even in a memory of the long deceased! Blessed are the poor in spirit! *[He subsides weakly on his chair, his hand pressed to his heart]*

*Cybel [like an idol]* Go home and sleep Your wife'll be worried

*Dion* She knows—but she'll never admit to herself that her husband ever entered your door *[Mocking]* Aren't women loyal—to their vanity and their other things!

*Cybel* Brown is coming soon, don't forget

*Dion* He knows too and can't admit Perhaps he needs me here—unknown What first aroused his passion to possess you exclusively, do you think? Because he knew you loved me, and he felt himself cheated He wanted what he thought was my love of the flesh! He feels I have no right to love He'd like to steal it as he steals my ideas—complacently—righteously Oh, the good Brown!

*Cybel* But you like him, too! You're brothers, I guess, somehow Well, remember he's paying, he'll pay—in some way or other

*Dion [raising his head as if starting to remove the mask].* I know Poor Billy! God forgive me the evil I've done him!

*Cybel [reaching out and taking his hand]* Poor boy!

*[DION presses her hand convulsively]*

*Dion [with forced harshness]* Well, homeward, Christian soldier! I'm off Bye-bye, Mother Earth!

*[He starts to go out She seems about to let him go, then suddenly starts and calls with deep grief]*

*Cybel* Dion!

*[He looks at her There is a pause He comes slowly back She speaks strangely, in a deep, far-off voice, and yet like a mother talking to her little son]*

You mustn't forget to kiss me before you go, Dion *[She removes his mask]* Haven't

I told you to take off your mask in the house? Look at me, Dion I've—just—seen—something I'm afraid you're going away a long, long ways I'm afraid I won't see you again for a long, long time So it's good-by, dear

*[She kisses him gently He begins to sob She hands him back his mask]*

Here you are Don't get hurt Remember, it's all a game, and after you're asleep, I'll tuck you in

Dion *[in a choking, heart-broken cry]* Mother! *[Then he claps on his mask with a terrible effort of will—mockingly]* Go to the devil, you sentimental old pig! See you tomorrow! *[He goes, whistling, slamming the door]*

Cybel *[like an idol again]* What's the good of bearing children? What's the use of giving birth to death?

*[She sighs wearily, turns, puts a plug in the piano, which starts up its old sentimental tune At the same moment BROWN enters quietly from the left He is the ideal of the still youthful, good-looking, well-groomed, successful provincial American of forty Just now, he is plainly perturbed He is not able to see either CYBEL's face or her mask]*

Brown Cybell

*[She starts, jams off the music and reaches for her mask but has no time to put it on]*

Wasn't that Dion I just saw going out—after all your promises never to see him!

*[She turns like an idol, holding the mask behind her He stares, bewildered—stammers]*

I—I beg your pardon—I thought . .

Cybel *[in her strange voice]* Cybel's gone out to dig in the earth and pray

Brown *[with more assurance]* But—aren't those her clothes?

Cybel Cybel doesn't want people to see me naked I'm her sister Dion came to see me

Brown *[relieved]* So that's what he's up to, is it? *[With a pitying sigh]* Poor Margaret! *[With playful reproof]* You really shouldn't encourage him He's married and got three big sons

Cybel And you haven't

Brown *[stung]* No, I'm not married

Cybel He and I were friends

Brown *[with a playful wink]* Yes, I can

imagine how the platonic must appeal to Dion's pure, innocent type! It's no good your kidding me about Dion We've been friends since we were kids I know him in and out I've always stood up for him whatever he's done—so you can be perfectly frank I only spoke as I did on account of Margaret—his wife—it's pretty tough on her

Cybel You love his wife

Brown *[scandalized]* What? What are you talking about? *[Uncertainly]* Don't be a fool! *[After a pause—as if impelled by an intense curiosity]* So Dion is your lover, eh? That's very interesting *[He pulls his chair closer to hers]* Sit down Let's talk

*[She continues to stand, the mask held behind her]*

Tell me—I've always been curious—what is it that makes Dion so attractive to women—especially certain types of women, if you'll pardon me? He always has been, and yet I never could see exactly what they saw in him Is it his looks—or because he's such a violent sensualist—or because he poses as artistic and temperamental—or because he's so wild—or just what is it?

Cybel He's alive!

*[BROWN suddenly takes one of her hands and kisses it]*

Brown *[insinuatingly]* Well, don't you think I'm alive, too? *[Eagerly]* Listen Would you consider giving up Dion—and letting me take care of you under a similar arrangement to the one I've made with Cybel? I like you, you can see that I won't bother you much—I'm much too busy—you can do what you like—lead your own life—except for seeing him

*[He stops There is a pause She stares ahead unmoved as if she hadn't heard He pleads]*

Well—what do you say? Please do!

Cybel *[her voice very weary]* Cybel said to tell you she'd be back next week, Mr Brown

Brown *[with queer agony]* You mean you won't? Don't be so cruel! I love you!

*[She walks away He clutches at her pleadingly]*

At least—I'll give you anything you ask!—please promise me you won't see Dion Anthony again!

Cybel *[with deep grief]* He will never see me again, I promise you Good-by!

Brown *[jubilantly, kissing her hand—po-*

*lately*] Thank you! Thank you! I'm exceedingly grateful [*Tactfully*] I won't disturb you any further Please forgive my intrusion, and remember me to Cybel when you write [*He bows, turns, and goes out*]

## SCENE TWO

*The drafting room in BROWN'S office DION'S drafting table with a high stool in front is at the center Another stool is to the left of it At the right is a bench It is in the evening of the same day The black wall drop has windows painted on it with a dim, street-lighted view of black houses across the way*

DION *is sitting on the stool in back of the table, reading aloud from the "Imitation of Christ" by Thomas à Kempis to his mask, which is on the table before him His own face is gentler, more spiritual, more saint-like and ascetic than ever before*

Dion [*like a priest, offering up prayers for the dying*] "Quickly must thou be gone from hence, see then how matters stand with thee Ah, fool—learn now to die to the world that thou mayst begin to live with Christ! Do now, beloved, do now all thou canst because thou knowst not when thou shalt die, nor dost thou know what shall befall thee after death Keep thyself as a pilgrim, and a stranger upon earth, to whom the affairs of this world do not—belong! Keep thy heart free and raised upwards to God, because thou hast not here a lasting abode 'Because at what hour you know not the Son of Man will come!'" Amen [*He raises his hand over the mask as if he were blessing it, closes the book and puts it back in his pocket He raises the mask in his hands and stares at it with a ptying tenderness*] Peace, poor tortured one, brave pitiful pride of man, the hour of our deliverance comes Tomorrow we may be with Him in Paradise!

[*He kisses it on the lips and sets it down again There is the noise of footsteps climbing the stairs in the hallway He grabs up the mask in a sudden panic and, as a knock comes on the door, he claps it on and calls mockingly*] Come in, Mrs Anthony, come in!

[MARGARET *enters In one hand behind her, hidden from him, is the mask of the brave face she puts on before the*

*world to hide her suffering and disillusionment, and which she has just taken off Her own face is still sweet and pretty but lined, drawn and careworn for its years, sad, resigned, but a bit querulous*]

Margaret [*wearily reproving*] Thank goodness I've found you! Why haven't you been home the last two days? It's bad enough your drinking again without your staying away and worrying us to death!

Dion [*bitterly*] My ears knew her footsteps One gets to recognize everything—and to see nothing!

Margaret I finally sent the boys out looking for you and came myself [*With tired solicitude*] I suppose you haven't eaten a thing, as usual Won't you come home and let me fry you a chop?

Dion [*wonderingly*] Can Margaret still love Dion Anthony? Is it possible she does?

Margaret [*forcing a tired smile*] I suppose so, Dion. I certainly oughtn't to, had I?

Dion [*in the same tone*] And I love Margaret! What haunted, haunting ghosts we are! We dimly remember so much it will take us so many million years to forget! [*He comes forward, putting one arm around her bowed shoulders, and they kiss*]

Margaret [*patting his hand affectionately*] No, you certainly don't deserve it When I stop to think of all you've made me go through in the years since we settled down here . . . I really don't believe I could ever have stood it if it weren't for the boys! [*Forcing a smile*] But perhaps I would—I've always been such a big fool about you

Dion [*a bit mockingly*] The boys! Three strong sons! Margaret can afford to be magnanimous!

Margaret If they didn't find you, they were coming to meet me here

Dion [*with sudden wildness—torturedly, sinking on his knees beside her*] Margaret! Margaret! I'm lonely! I'm frightened! I'm going away! I've got to say good-by!

Margaret [*patting his hair*] Poor boy! Poor Dion! Come home and sleep

Dion [*springing up frantically*] No! I'm a man! I'm a lonely man! I can't go back! I have conceived myself! [*With desperate mockery*] Look at me, Mrs Anthony! It's the last chance! Tomorrow I'll have moved on to the next hell! Behold your man—

the sniveling, cringing, life-denying Christian slave you have so nobly ignored in the father of your sons! Look! *[He tears the mask from his face, which is radiant with a great pure love for her and a great sympathy and tenderness]* O woman—my love—that I have sinned against in my sick pride and cruelty—forgive my sins—forgive my solitude—forgive my sickness—forgive me! *[He kneels and kisses the hem of her dress]*

*[MARGARET, who has been staring at him in terror, raises her mask to ward off his face]*

Margaret Dion! Don't! I can't bear it! You're like a ghost! You're dead! Oh, my God! Help! Help!

*[She falls back fainting on the bench. He looks at her—then takes her hand which holds her mask and looks at that face—gently]*

And now I am permitted to understand and love you, too! *[He kisses the mask first—then kisses her face, murmuring]* And you, sweetheart! Blessed, thrice blessed are the meek!

*[There is a sound of heavy, hurrying footsteps on the stairs. He puts on his mask in haste. The THREE SONS rush into the room. The Eldest is about fourteen, the two others thirteen and twelve. They look healthy, normal likeable boys, with much the same quality as BILLY BROWN's in Act One, Scene One. They stop short and stiffen all in a row, staring from the woman on the bench to their father, accusingly]*

Eldest We heard someone yell. It sounded like Mother.

Dion *[defensively]* No. It was this lady—my wife.

Eldest But hasn't Mother come yet?

Dion *[going to MARGARET]* Yes. Your Mother is here. *[He stands between them and puts her mask over MARGARET's face—then steps back.]* She has fainted. You'd better bring her to.

Boys Mother!

*[They run to her side, kneel and rub her wrists. The ELDEST smooths back her hair.]*

Dion *[watching them]* At least I am leaving her well provided for. *[He addresses them directly.]* Tell your mother she'll get word from Mr. Brown's house. I must pay

him a farewell call. I am going. Good-by. *[They stop, staring at him fixedly, with eyes a mixture of bewilderment, distrust and hurt.]*

Eldest *[awkwardly and shamefacedly]* Honest, I think you ought to have . . .

Second Yes, honest you ought . . .

Youngest Yes, honest.

Dion *[in a friendly tone]* I know. But I couldn't. That's for you who can. You must inherit the earth for her. Don't forget now, boys. Good-by.

Boys *[in the same awkward, self-conscious tone, one after another]* Good-by—good-by—good-by. *[DION goes]*

### SCENE THREE

The library of WILLIAM BROWN's home—night of the same day. A backdrop of carefully painted, prosperous, bourgeois culture, bookcases filled with sets, etc. The heavy table in the center of the room is expensive. The leather armchair at the left of it and the couch at the right are opulently comfortable. The reading lamp on the table is the only light.

BROWN sits in the chair at the left, reading an architectural periodical. His expression is composed and gravely receptive. In outline, his face suggests a Roman consul on an old coin. There is an incongruous distinction about it, the quality of unquestioning faith in the finality of its achievement.

There is a sudden loud thumping on the front door and the ringing of the bell. BROWN frowns and listens as a servant answers. DION's voice can be heard, raised mockingly.

Dion Tell him it's the devil come to conclude a bargain.

Brown *[suppressing annoyance, and calling out with forced good nature]* Come on in, Dion.

*[DION enters. He is in a wild state. His clothes are disheveled, his masked face has a terrible deathlike intensity—its mocking irony has become so cruelly malignant as to give him the appearance of a real demon, tortured into torturing others.]*

Sit down.

Dion *[standing and singing]* William



Brown's soul lies moldering in the crib, but his body goes marching on!

*Brown [maintaining the same indulgent, big-brotherly tone, which he tries to hold throughout the scene]* Not so loud, for Pete's sake! I don't mind—but I've got neighbors

*Dion* Hate them! Fear thy neighbor as thyself! That's the leaden rule for the safe and sane [*Advancing to the table with a sort of deadly calm*] Listen! One day when I was four years old, a boy sneaked up behind when I was drawing a picture in the sand he couldn't draw and hit me on the head with a stick and kicked out my picture and laughed when I cried It wasn't what he'd done that made me cry, but him! I had loved and trusted him, and suddenly the good God was disproved in his person and the evil and injustice of Man was born! Everyone called me cry-baby, so I became silent for life and designed a mask of the Bad Boy Pan in which to live and rebel against that other boy's God and protect myself from His cruelty And that other boy, secretly he felt ashamed but he couldn't acknowledge it, so from that day he instinctively developed into the good boy, the good friend, the good man, William Brown!

*Brown [shamefacedly]* I remember now It was a dirty trick [*With a trace of resentment*] Sit down You know where the booze is Have a drink, if you like But I guess you've had enough already

*Dion [looking at him fixedly for a moment—then speaking strangely]* Thanks be to Brown for reminding me I must drink [*He goes and gets a bottle of whisky and a glass*]

*Brown [with a good-humored shrug]* All right It's your funeral

*Dion [returning and pouring out a big drink in the tumbler]* And William Brown's! When I die, he goes to hell! Skoal!

[*He drinks and stares malevolently in spite of himself, BROWN is uneasy There is a pause*]

*Brown [with forced casualness]* You've been on this toot for a week now

*Dion [tauntingly]* I've been celebrating the acceptance of my design for the cathedral

*Brown [humorously]* You certainly helped me a lot on it

*Dion [with a harsh laugh]* O perfect Brown! Never mind! I'll make him look in my mirror yet—and drown in it! [*He pours out another big drink*]

*Brown [rather tauntingly]* Go easy I don't want your corpse on my hands

*Dion* But I do [*He drinks*] Brown will still need me—to reassure him he's alive! I've loved, lusted, won and lost, sang and wept! I've been life's lover! I've fulfilled her will, and if she's through with me now, it's only because I was too weak to dominate her in turn It isn't enough to be her creature—you've got to create her, or she requests you to destroy yourself

*Brown [good-naturedly]*. Nonsense Go home and get some sleep

*Dion [as if he hadn't heard—bitingly]* But to be neither creature nor creator! To exist only in her indifference! To be unloved by life! [*BROWN stirs uneasily*] To be merely a successful freak, the result of some snide neutralizing of life forces—a spineless cactus—a wild boar of the mountains altered into a packer's hog eating to become food—a Don Juan inspired to romance by a monkey's glands—and to have Life not even think you funny enough to see!

*Brown [stung—angrily]* Bosh!

*Dion* Consider Mr Brown His parents bore him on earth as if they were thereby entering him in a baby parade with prizes for the fattest—and he's still being wheeled along in the procession, too fat now to learn to walk, let alone to dance or run, and he'll never live until his liberated dust quickens into earth!

*Brown [gruffly]* Rave on! [*With forced good-nature*] Well, Dion, at any rate, I'm satisfied

*Dion [quickly and malevolently]* No! Brown isn't satisfied! He's piled on layers of protective fat, but vaguely, deeply he feels at his heart the gnawing of a doubt! And I'm interested in that germ which wriggles like a question mark of insecurity in his blood, because it's part of the creative life Brown's stolen from me!

*Brown [forcing a sour grin]* Steal germs? I thought you caught them

*Dion [as if he hadn't heard]* It's mine—and I'm interested in seeing it thrive and breed and become multitudes and eat until Brown is consumed!

*Brown [unable to restrain a shudder]*

Sometimes when you're drunk, you're positively evil, do you know it?

*Dion [somerly]* When Pan was forbidden the light and warmth of the sun, he grew sensitive and self-conscious and proud and revengeful—and became Prince of Darkness

*Brown [jocularly]* You don't fit the rôle of Pan, Dion. It sounds to me like Bacchus, alias the Demon Rum, doing the talking

*[Dion recovers from his spasm with a start and stares at BROWN with terrible hatred. There is a pause. In spite of himself, BROWN squirms and adopts a placating tone]*

Go home. Be a good scout. It's all well enough celebrating our design being accepted, but—

*Dion [in a steely voice]* I've been the brains! I've been the design! I've designed even his success—drunk and laughing at him—laughing at his career! Not proud! Sick! Sick of myself and him! Designing and getting drunk! Saving my woman and children! *[He laughs]* Ha! And this cathedral is my masterpiece! It will make Brown the most eminent architect in this state of God's Country. I put a lot into it—what was left of my life! It's one vivid blasphemy from sidewalk to the tips of its spires!—but so concealed that the fools will never know. They'll kneel and worship the ironic Silenus who tells them the best good is never to be born! *[He laughs triumphantly]* Well, blasphemy is faith, isn't it? In self-preservation the devil must believe! But Mr Brown, the Great Brown, has no faith! He couldn't design a cathedral without it looking like the First Supernatural Bank! He only believes in the immortality of the moral belly! *[He laughs wildly—then sinks down in his chair, gasping, his hands pressed to his heart. Then suddenly he becomes deadly calm and pronounces like a cruel malignant condemnation]* From now on, Brown will never design anything. He will devote his life to renovating the house of my Cybel into a home for my Margaret!

*Brown [springing to his feet, his face convulsed with strange agony]* I've stood enough! How dare you!

*Dion [his voice like a probe]* Why has no woman ever loved him? Why has he always been the Big Brother, the Friend? Isn't their trust—a contempt?

*Brown* You lie!

*Dion* Why has he never been able to love—since my Margaret? Why has he never married? Why has he tried to steal Cybel, as he once tried to steal Margaret? Isn't it out of revenge—and envy?

*Brown [violently]* Rot! I wanted Cybel, and I bought her!

*Dion* Brown bought her for me! She has loved me more than he will ever know!

*Brown* You lie! *[Furiously]* I'll throw her back on the street!

*Dion* To me! To her fellow creature! Why hasn't Brown had children—he who loves children—he who loves *my* children—he who envies me *my* children?

*Brown [brokenly]* I'm not ashamed to envy you them!

*Dion* They like Brown, too—as a friend—as an equal—as Margaret has always liked him.

*Brown [brokenly]* And as I've liked her!

*Dion* How many million times Brown has thought how much better for her it would have been if she'd chosen him instead!

*Brown [torturedly]* You lie! *[With sudden frenzied defiance]* All right! If you force me to say it, I do love Margaret! I always have loved her and you've always known I did!

*Dion [with a terrible composure]* No! That is merely the appearance, not the truth! Brown loves me! He loves me because I have always possessed the power he needed for love, because I am love!

*Brown [frenziedly]* You drunken bum! *[He leaps on Dion and grabs him by the throat]*

*Dion [triumphantly, staring into his eyes]* Ah! Now he looks into the mirror! Now he sees his face!

*[BROWN lets go of him and staggers back to his chair, pale and trembling]*

*Brown [humbly]* Stop, for God's sake! You're mad!

*Dion [sinking in his chair, more and more weakly]* I'm done. My heart, not Brown. *[Mockingly]* My last will and testament! I leave Dion Anthony to William Brown—for him to love and obey—for him to become me—then my Margaret will love me—my children will love me—Mr and Mrs Brown and sons, happily ever after! *[Staggering to his full height and looking upward defiantly]* Nothing more—



but Man's last gesture—by which he conquers—to laugh! Ha! . [*He begins, stops as if paralyzed, and drops on his knees by BROWN's chair, his mask falling off, his Christian martyr's face at the point of death*] Forgive me, Billy Bury me, hide me, forget me for your own happiness! May Margaret love you! May you design the Temple of Man's Soul! Blessed are the meek and the poor in spirit! [*He kisses BROWN's feet—then more and more weakly and childishly*] What was the prayer, Billy? I'm getting so sleepy .

Brown [*in a trancelike tone*] "Our Father who art in Heaven"

Dion [*drowsily*] "Our Father" .

[*He dies There is a pause BROWN remains in a stupor for a moment—then stirs himself, puts his hand on DION's breast*]

Brown [*dully*] He's dead—at last [*He says this mechanically but the last two words awaken him—wonderingly*] At last? [*With triumph*] At last! [*He stares at DION's real face contemptuously*] So that's the poor weakling you really were! No wonder you hid! And I've always been afraid of you—yes, I'll confess it now, in awe of you! Paugh! [*He picks up the mask from the floor*] No, not of you! Of this! Say what you like, it's strong if it is bad! And this is what Margaret loved, not you! Not you! This man!—this man who willed himself to me! [*Struck by an idea, he jumps to his feet*] By God!

[*He slowly starts to put the mask on A knocking comes on the street door He starts guiltily, laying the mask on the table Then he picks it up again quickly, takes the dead body and carries it off left He reappears immediately and goes to the front door as the knocking recommences He calls gruffly*]

Hello! Who's there?

Margaret It's Margaret, Billy I'm looking for Dion

Brown [*uncertainly*] Oh—all right [*Unfastening the door*] Come in Hello, Margaret Hello, boys! He's here He's asleep I—I was just dozing off, too

[*MARGARET enters She is wearing her mask The THREE SONS are with her*]

Margaret [*seeing the bottle, forcing a laugh*] Has he been celebrating?

Brown [*with strange glibness now*] No I

was He wasn't He said he'd sworn off tonight—forever—for your sake—and the kids!

Margaret [*with amazed joy*] Dion said that? [*Hastily defensive*] But of course he never does drink much Where is he?

Brown Upstairs I'll wake him He felt bad He took off his clothes to take a bath before he lay down You just wait here

[*She sits in the chair where DION had sat and stares straight before her The SONS group around her, as if for a family photo. BROWN hurries out*]

Margaret It's late to keep you boys up Aren't you sleepy?

Boys No, Mother.

Margaret [*proudly*] I'm glad to have three such strong boys to protect me

Eldest [*boastingly*] We'd kill anyone that touched you, wouldn't we?

Next You bet! We'd make him wish he hadn't!

Youngest You bet!

Margaret You're Mother's brave boys! [*She laughs fondly—then asks curiously*] Do you like Mr Brown?

Eldest Sure thing! He's a regular fellow

Next He's all right!

Youngest Sure thing!

Margaret [*half to herself*] Your father claims he steals his ideas

Eldest [*with a sheepish grin*] I'll bet father said that when he was—just talking

Next Mr Brown doesn't have to steal, does he?

Youngest I should say not! He's awful rich

Margaret Do you love your father?

Eldest [*scuffling—embarrassed*] Why—of course . .

Next [*ditto*] Sure thing!

Youngest Sure I do

Margaret [*with a sigh*] I think you'd better start on before—right now—before your father comes He'll be very sick and nervous, and he'll want to be quiet So run along!

Boys All right

[*They file out and close the front door as BROWN, dressed in DION's clothes and wearing his mask, appears at the door*]

Margaret [*taking off her mask, speaking gladly*] Dion!

[*She stares wonderingly at him and he*

*at her, she goes to him and puts an arm around him]*

Poor dear, do you feel sick? *[He nods]* But you look—*[squeezing his arms]* why, you actually feel stronger and better already! Is it true what Billy told me—about your swearing off forever?

*[He nods She exclaims intensely]* Oh, if you'll only—and get well—we can still be so happy! Give Mother a kiss

*[They kiss A shudder passes through both of them She breaks away, laughing with aroused desire]*

Why, Dion? Aren't you ashamed? You haven't kissed me like that in ages!

Brown *[his voice imitating Dion's and muffled by the mask]* I've wanted to, Margaret!

Margaret *[gayly and coquettishly now]* Were you afraid I'd spurn you? Why, Dion, something has happened! It's like a miracle! Even your voice is changed! It actually sounds younger, do you know it? *[Solicitously]* But you must be worn out! Let's go home *[With an impulsive movement she flings her arms wide open, throwing her mask away from her as if suddenly no longer needing it]* Oh, I'm beginning to feel so happy, Dion—so happy!

Brown *[stifledly]* Let's go home

*[She puts her arm around him They walk to the door]*

### ACT THREE

#### SCENE ONE

*The drafting room and private office of BROWN are both shown The former is at the left, the latter at the right of a dividing wall at the center The arrangement of furniture in each room is the same as in the previous scenes It is ten in the morning of a day about a month later The backdrop for both rooms is of plain wall with a few tacked-up designs and blue prints painted on it*

TWO DRAFTSMEN, a middle-aged man and a young man, both stoop-shouldered, are sitting on stools behind what was formerly DION's table They are tracing plans They talk as they work

Older Draftsman W B is late again

Younger Draftsman Wonder what's got into him the last month?

*[There is a pause They work silently]*  
Older Draftsman Yes, ever since he fired Dion

Younger Draftsman Funny his firing him all of a sudden like that

*[There is a pause They work]*  
Older Draftsman I haven't seen Dion around town since then Have you?

Younger Draftsman No, not since Brown told us he'd canned him I suppose he's off drowning his sorrow!

Older Draftsman I heard someone had seen him at home and he was sober and looking fine

*[There is a pause They work]*  
Younger Draftsman What got into Brown? They say he fired all his old servants that same day and only uses his house to sleep in

Older Draftsman *[with a sneer]* Artistic temperament, maybe—the real name of which is swelled head!

*[There is a noise of footsteps from the hall He whispers warningly]*  
Ssstt!

*[They bend over their table MARGARET enters She does not need to wear a mask now Her face has regained the self-confident spirit of its youth, her eyes shine with happiness]*

Margaret *[heartily]* Good morning! What a lovely day!

Both *[perfunctorily]* Good morning, Mrs Anthony

Margaret *[looking around]* You've been changing around in here, haven't you? Where is Dion?

*[They stare at her]*  
I forgot to tell him something important this morning, and our phone's out of order So if you'll tell him I'm here

*[They don't move There is a pause MARGARET speaks stiffly]*

Oh, I realize Mr Brown has given strict orders Dion is not to be disturbed, but surely *[Sharply]* Where is my husband, please?

Older Draftsman We don't know

Margaret You don't know?

Younger Draftsman We haven't seen him  
Margaret Why, he left home at eighty-three!

Older Draftsman To come here?

Younger Draftsman This morning?

Margaret *[provoked]* Why, of course, to come here—as he does every day!

[*They stare at her There is a pause*]  
*Older Draftsman [evasively]* We haven't seen him

*Margaret [with asperity]* Where is Mr Brown?

*Younger Draftsman [at a noise of footsteps from the hall—sulkily]* Coming now

[*BROWN enters He is now wearing a mask which is an exact likeness of his face as it was in the last scene—the self-assured success When he sees MARGARET, he starts back apprehensively*]

*Brown [immediately controlling himself—breezily]* Hello, Margaret! This is a pleasant surprise! [*He holds out his hand*]

*Margaret [hardly taking it—reservedly]* Good morning

*Brown [turning quickly to the DRAFTSMEN]* I hope you explained to Mrs Anthony how busy Dion

*Margaret [interrupting him—stiffly]* I certainly can't understand

*Brown [hastily]* I'll explain Come in here and be comfortable [*He throws open the door and ushers her into his private office*]

*Older Draftsman* Dion must be putting over some bluff on her

*Younger Draftsman* Pretending he's still here—and Brown's helping him

*Older Draftsman* But why should Brown, after he ?

*Younger Draftsman* Well, I suppose Search me

[*They work*]

*Brown* Have a chair, Margaret

[*She sits on the chair stiffly He sits behind the desk*]

*Margaret [coldly]* I'd like some explanation

*Brown [coaxingly]* Now, don't get angry, Margaret! Dion is hard at work on his design for the new State Capitol, and I don't want him disturbed, not even by you! So be a good sport! It's for his own good, remember! I asked him to explain to you

*Margaret [relenting]* He told me you'd agreed to ask me and the boys not to come here—but then, we hardly ever did

*Brown* But you might! [*With confidential friendliness*] This is for his sake, Margaret I know Dion He's got to be able to work without distractions He's not the ordinary man—you appreciate that And this design means his whole future! He's to

get full credit for it, and as soon as it's accepted, I take him into partnership It's all agreed And after that I'm going to take a long vacation—go to Europe for a couple of years—and leave everything here in Dion's hands! Hasn't he told you all this?

*Margaret [jubilant now]* Yes—but I could hardly believe [*Proudly*] I'm sure he can do it He's been like a new man lately, so full of ambition and energy! It's made me so happy! [*She stops in confusion*]

*Brown [deeply moved, and taking her hand impulsively]* And it has made me happy, too!

*Margaret [confused—with an amused laugh]* Why, Billy Brown! For a moment, I thought it was Dion, your voice sounded so much !

*Brown [with sudden desperation]* Margaret, I've got to tell you! I can't go on like this any longer! I've got to confess ! There's something !

*Margaret [alarmed]* Not—not about Dion?

*Brown [harshly]* To hell with Dion! To hell with Billy Brown! [*He tears off his mask and reveals a suffering face that is ravaged and haggard, his own face tortured and distorted by the demon of DION's mask*] Think of me! I love you, Margaret! Leave him! I've always loved you! Come away with me! I'll sell out here! We'll go abroad and be happy!

*Margaret [amazed]* Billy Brown, do you realize what you're saying? [*With a shudder*] Are you crazy? Your face—is terrible You're sick! Shall I phone for a doctor?

*Brown [turning away slowly and putting on his mask—dully]* No I've been on the verge—of a breakdown—for some time I get spells . I'm better now. [*He turns back to her*] Forgive me! Forget what I said! But, for all our sakes, don't come here again

*Margaret [coldly]* After this—I assure you ! [*Looking at him with pained incredulity*] Why, Billy—I simply won't believe—after all these years . !

*Brown* It will never happen again Good-by

*Margaret* Good-by [*Wishing to leave on a pleasant change of subject—forcing a smile*] Don't work Dion to death! He's never home for dinner any more

[*She goes out past the DRAFTSMEN*]

BROWN sits down at his desk, taking off the mask again He stares at it with bitter, cynical amusement]

Brown You're dead, William Brown, dead beyond hope of resurrection! It's the Dion you buried in your garden who killed you, not you him! It's Margaret's husband who [He laughs harshly] Paradise by proxy! Love by mistaken identity! God! [This is almost a prayer—then fiercely defiant] But it is paradise! I do love!

[As he is speaking, a well-dressed, important, stout man enters the drafting room He is carrying a rolled-up plan in his hand He nods condescendingly and goes directly to BROWN's door, on which he raps sharply, and, without waiting for an answer, turns the knob BROWN has just time to turn his head and get his mask on]

Man [briskly] Ah, good morning! I came right in Hope I didn't disturb ?

Brown [the successful architect now—urbanely] Not at all, sir How are you? [They shake hands]

Sit down Have a cigar And now what can I do for you this morning?

Man [unrolling his plan] It's your plan My wife and I have been going over it again We like it—and we don't—and when a man plans to lay out half a million, why he wants everything exactly right, eh?

[BROWN nods]

It's too cold, too spare, too like a tomb, if you'll pardon me, for a liveable home Can't you liven it up, put in some decorations, make it fancier and warmer—you know what I mean [He looks at BROWN a bit doubtfully] People tell me you had an assistant, Anthony, who was a real shark on these details but that you've fired him—

Brown [suavely] Gossip! He's still with me but, for reasons of his own, doesn't wish it known Yes, I trained him, and he's very ingenious I'll turn this right over to him and instruct him to carry out your wishes

## SCENE TWO

The library of BROWN's home about eight the same night BROWN can be heard feeling his way in through the dark He switches on the reading lamp on the table Directly

under it on a sort of stand is the mask of DION, its empty eyes staring front

BROWN takes off his own mask and lays it on the table before DION's He flings himself down in the chair and stares without moving into the eyes of DION's mask Finally, he begins to talk to it in a bitter, mocking tone

Brown Listen! Today was a narrow escape—for us! We can't avoid discovery much longer We must get our plot to working! We've already made William Brown's will, leaving you his money and business We must hustle off to Europe now—and murder him there! [A bit tauntingly] Then you—the I in you—I will live with Margaret happily ever after [More tauntingly] She will have children by me! [He seems to hear some mocking denial from the mask He bends toward it] What? [With a sneer] Anyway, that doesn't matter! Your children already love me more than they ever loved you! And Margaret loves me more! You think you've won, do you—that I've got to vanish into you in order to live? Not yet, my friend! Never! Wait! Gradually Margaret will love what is beneath—me! Little by little I'll teach her to know me, and then finally I'll reveal myself to her, and confess that I stole your place out of love for her, and she'll understand and forgive and love me! And you'll be forgotten! Ha! [Again he bends down to the mask as if listening—torturedly] What's that? She'll never believe? She'll never see? She'll never understand? You lie, devil! [He reaches out his hands as if to take the mask by the throat, then shrinks back with a shudder of hopeless despair] God have mercy! Let me believe! Blessed are the merciful! Let me obtain mercy! [He waits, his face upturned—pleadingly] Not yet? [Despairingly] Never?

[There is a pause Then, in a sudden panic of dread, he reaches out for the mask of DION like a dope fiend after a drug As soon as he holds it, he seems to gain strength and is able to force a sad laugh]

Now I am drinking your strength, Dion—strength to love in this world and die and sleep and become fertile earth, as you are becoming now in my garden—your weakness the strength of my flowers, your failure as an artist painting their petals with

life! [*With bravado*] Come with me while Margaret's bridegroom dresses in your clothes, Mr. Anthony! I need the devil when I'm in the dark! [*He goes off out of the room, but can be heard talking*] Your clothes begin to fit me better than my own! Hurry, Brother! It's time we were home Our wife is waiting! [*He reappears, having changed his coat and trousers*] Come with me and tell her again I love her! Come and hear her tell me how she loves you! [*He suddenly cannot help kissing the mask*] I love you because she loves you! My kisses on your lips are for her! [*He puts the mask over his face and stands for a moment, seeming to grow tall and proud—then with a laugh of bold self-assurance*] Out by the back way! I mustn't forget I'm a desperate criminal, pursued by God, and by myself! [*He goes out, laughing with amused satisfaction*]

### SCENE THREE

*The sitting-room of MARGARET'S home It is about half an hour after the last scene MARGARET sits on the sofa, waiting with the anxious, impatient expectancy of one deeply in love She is dressed with a careful, subtle extra touch to attract the eye She looks young and happy She is trying to read a book The front door is heard opening and closing She leaps up and runs back to throw her arms around BROWN as he enters from the right, rear She kisses him passionately He recoils with a sort of guilt*

Margaret [*laughingly*] Why, you hateful old thing, you! I really believe you were trying to avoid kissing me! Well, just for that, I'll never

Brown [*with fierce, defiant passion, kissing her again and again*] Margaret!

Margaret Call me Peggy again You used to when you really loved me [*Softly*] Remember the school commencement dance—you and I on the dock in the moonlight?

Brown [*with pain*] No [*He takes his arms from around her*]

Margaret [*still holding him—with a laugh*] Well, I like that! You old bear, you! Why not?

Brown [*sadly*] It was so long ago

Margaret [*a bit melancholy*] You mean you don't want to be reminded that we're getting old?

Brown Yes [*He kisses her gently*] I'm tired Let's sit down

[*They sit on the sofa, his arm about her, her head on his shoulder*]

Margaret [*with a happy sigh*] I don't mind remembering—now I'm happy It's only when I'm unhappy that it hurts—and I've been so happy lately, dear—and so grateful to you!

[*He stirs uneasily She goes on joyfully*]

Everything's changed! I'd gotten pretty resigned to—and sad and hopeless, too—and then all at once you turn right around, and everything is the same as when we were first married—much better even, for I was never sure of you then You were always so strange and aloof and alone, it seemed I was never really touching you But now I feel you've become quite human—like me—and I'm so happy, dear! [*She kisses him*]

Brown [*his voice trembling*] Then I have made you happy—happier than ever before—no matter what happens?

[*She nods*]

Then—that justifies everything! [*He forces a laugh*]

Margaret Of course it does! I've always known that But you—you wouldn't be—or you couldn't be—and I could never help you—and all the time I knew you were so lonely! I could always hear you calling to me that you were lost, but I couldn't find the path to you because I was lost, too! That's an awful way for a wife to feel! [*She laughs—joyfully*] But now you're here! You're mine! You're my long-lost lover, and my husband, and my big boy, too!

Brown [*with a trace of jealousy*] Where are your other big boys tonight?

Margaret Out to a dance They've all acquired girls, I'll have you know

Brown [*mockingly*] Aren't you jealous?

Margaret [*gayly*]. Of course! Terribly! But I'm diplomatic I don't let them see [*Changing the subject*] Believe me, they've noticed the change in you! The eldest was saying to me to-day "It's great not to have Father so nervous any more Why, he's a regular sport when he gets started!" And the other two said very solemnly "You bet!" [*She laughs*]

Brown [*brokenly*] I—I'm glad

Margaret Dion! You're crying!

[*BROWN, stung by the name, gets up*]

Brown [harshly] Nonsense! Did you ever know Dion to cry about anyone?

Margaret [sadly] You couldn't—then You were too lonely You had no one to cry to

[BROWN goes and takes a rolled-up plan from the table drawer]

Brown [dully] I've got to do some work

Margaret [disappointedly] What, has that old Billy Brown got you to work at home again, too?

Brown [ironically] It's for Dion's good, you know—and yours

Margaret [making the best of it—cheerfully] All right I won't be selfish It really makes me proud to have you so ambitious Let me help

[She brings his drawing-board, which he puts on the table and pins his plans upon She sits on the sofa and picks up her book]

Brown [carefully casual] I hear you were in to see me today?

Margaret Yes, and Billy wouldn't hear of it! I was quite furious until he convinced me it was all for the best When is he going to take you into partnership?

Brown Very soon now

Margaret And will he really give you full charge when he goes abroad?

Brown Yes

Margaret [practically] I'd pin him down if I could Promises are all right, but [She hesitates] I don't trust him

Brown [with a start, sharply] What makes you say that?

Margaret Oh, something that happened today

Brown What?

Margaret I don't mean I blame him, but—to be frank, I think the Great God Brown, as you call him, is getting a bit queer, and it's time he took a vacation Don't you?

Brown [his voice a bit excited—but guardedly] But why? What did he do?

Margaret [hesitatingly] Well—it's really too silly—he suddenly got awfully strange His face scared me It was like a corpse Then he raved on some nonsense about he always loved me He went on like a perfect fool!

[She looks at BROWN, who is staring at her She becomes uneasy] Maybe I shouldn't tell you this He simply wasn't responsible Then he came to him-

self and was all right and begged my pardon and seemed dreadfully sorry, and I felt sorry for him [With a shudder] But honestly, Dion, it was just too disgusting for words to hear him! [With kind, devastating contempt] Poor Billy!

Brown [with a show of tortured derision] Poor Billy! Poor Billy the Goat! [With mocking frenzy] I'll kill him for you! I'll serve you his heart for breakfast!

Margaret [jumping up—frightenedly] Dion!

Brown [waving his pencil knife with grotesque flourishes] I tell you I'll murder this God-damned disgusting Great God Brown who stands like a fatted calf in the way of our health and wealth and happiness!

[MARGARET, bewildered, not knowing how much he is pretending, puts an arm about him]

Margaret Don't, dear! You're being horrid and strange again It makes me afraid you haven't really changed, after all

Brown [unheeding] And then my wife can be happy! Ha!

[He laughs She begins to cry He controls himself, and pats her head gently]

All right, dear Mr Brown is now safely in hell Forget him!

[MARGARET stops crying but is still worried]

Margaret I should never have told you—but I never imagined you'd take it seriously I've never thought of Billy Brown except as a friend, and lately not even that! He's just a stupid old fool!

Brown Ha-ha! Didn't I say he was in hell? They're torturing him! [Controlling himself again—exhaustedly] Please leave me alone now I've got to work

Margaret All right, dear I'll go into the next room and anything you want, just call [She pats his face—cajolingly] Is it all forgotten?

Brown Will you be happy?

Margaret Yes

Brown Then it's dead, I promise!

[She kisses him and goes out He stares ahead, then shakes off his thoughts and concentrates on his work—mockingly] Our beautiful new Capitol calls you, Mr Dion! To work! We'll adroitly hide old Silenus on the cupola! Let him dance over

their law-making with his eternal leer! [*He bends over his work*]

## ACT FOUR

### SCENE ONE

*The drafting room and BROWN's office It is dusk of a day about a month later*

*The Two DRAFTSMEN are bent over their table, working*

BROWN, at his desk, is working feverishly over a plan *He is wearing the mask of DION The mask of WILLIAM BROWN rests on the desk beside him As he works, he chuckles with malicious glee and finally flings down his pencil with a flourish*

Brown Done! In the name of the Almighty Brown, amen, amen! Here's a wondrous fair capitol! The design would do just as well for a Home for Criminal Imbeciles! Yet to them, such is my art, it will appear to possess a pure common-sense, a fat-bellied finality, as dignified as the suspenders of an assemblyman! Only to me will that pompous façade reveal itself as the wearily ironic grin of Pan as, his ears drowsy with the crumbling hum of past and future civilizations, he half-listens to the laws passed by his fleas to enslave him! Ha-ha-ha! [*He leaps grotesquely from behind his desk and cuts a few goatish capers, laughing with lustful merriment*] Long live Chief of Police Brown! District Attorney Brown! Alderman Brown! Assemblyman Brown! Mayor Brown! Congressman Brown! Governor Brown! Senator Brown! President Brown! [*He chants*] Oh, how many persons in one God make up the Good God Brown? Hahahaha!

*[The Two DRAFTSMEN in the next room have stopped work and are listening]*

*Younger Draftsman Drunk as a fool!*

*Older Draftsman At least Dion used to have the decency to stay away from the office—*

*Younger Draftsman Funny how it's got hold of Brown so quick!*

*Older Draftsman He was probably hitting it up on the Q T all the time*

*Brown [coming back to his desk, laughing to himself and out of breath] Time to become respectable again! [He takes off the DION mask and reaches out for the WILLIAM BROWN one—then stops, with a hand*

*on each, staring down on the plan with fascinated loathing His real face is now sick, ghastly, tortured, hollow-cheeked and feverish-eyed] Ugly! Hideous! Despicable! Why must the demon in me pander to cheapness—then punish me with self-loathing and life-hatred? Why am I not strong enough to perish—or blind enough to be content? [To heaven, bitterly but pleadingly] Give me the strength to destroy this!—and myself!—and him!—and I will believe in Thee!*

*[While he has been speaking, there has been a noise from the stairs The Two DRAFTSMEN have bent over their work MARGARET enters, closing the door behind her At this sound, BROWN starts He immediately senses who it is and exclaims with alarm]*

Margaret!

*[He grabs up both masks and goes into a room on the right MARGARET enters She looks healthy and happy, but her face wears a worried, solicitous expression]*

Margaret [*to the DRAFTSMEN*] Good morning Oh, you needn't look worried—it's Mr Brown I want to see, not my husband

*Younger Draftsman [hesitatingly] He's locked himself in—but maybe, if you'll knock .*

*[MARGARET knocks]*

Margaret [*calling somewhat embarrassedly*] Mr Brown!

*[BROWN enters his office, wearing the WILLIAM BROWN mask He comes quickly to the other door and unlocks it]*

*Brown [with a hectic cordiality] Come on, Margaret! Enter! This is delightful! Sit down! What can I do for you?*

*Margaret [taken aback—a bit stiffly] Nothing much*

*Brown Something about Dion, of course Well, your darling pet is all right—never better!*

*Margaret [coldly] That's a matter of opinion I think you're working him to death*

*Brown Oh, no, not him It's Brown who is to die We've agreed on that*

*Margaret [giving him a queer look] I'm serious*

*Brown So am I Deadly serious! Hahaha!*

*Margaret [checking her indignation] That's what I came to see you about*



Really, Dion has acted so hectic and on edge lately I'm sure he's on the verge of a breakdown

*Brown* Well, it certainly isn't drink He hasn't had a drop He doesn't need it! Haha! And I haven't, either, although the gossips are beginning to say I'm soused all the time! It's because I've started to laugh! Hahaha! They can't believe in joy in this town except by the bottle! What funny little people! Hahaha! When you're the Great God Brown, eh, Margaret? Hahaha!

*Margaret* [getting up—uneasily] I'm afraid I—

*Brown* Don't be afraid, my dear! I won't make love to you again! Honor bright! I'm too near the grave for such folly But it must have been funny for you when you came here the last time—watching a disgusting old fool like me, eh?—too funny for words! Hahaha! [With a sudden movement he flourishes the design before her] Look! We've finished it! Dion has finished it! His fame is made!

*Margaret* [tartly] Really, Billy, I believe you are drunk!

*Brown* Nobody kisses me—so you can all believe the worst! Hahaha!

*Margaret* [challengingly] Then, if Dion is through, why can't I see him?

*Brown* [crazily] See Dion? See Dion? Well, why not? It's an age of miracles The streets are full of Lazaruses Pray! I mean—wait a moment, if you please

[BROWN disappears into the room at the right A moment later he reappears in the mask of DION He holds out his arms, and MARGARET rushes into them They kiss passionately Finally he sits with her on the lounge]

*Margaret* So you've finished it!

*Brown* Yes The Committee is coming to see it soon I've made all the changes they'll like, the fools!

*Margaret* [lovingly] And can we go on that second honeymoon, right away now?

*Brown* In a week or so, I hope—as soon as I've gotten Brown off to Europe

*Margaret* Tell me— isn't he drinking hard?

*Brown* [laughing as BROWN did] Haha! Soused to the ears all the time! Soused on life! He can't stand it! It's burning his insides out!

*Margaret* [alarmed] Dear! I'm worried

about you You sound as crazy as he did—when you laugh! You must rest!

*Brown* [controlling himself] I'll rest in peace—when he's gone!

*Margaret* [with a queer look] Why, Dion, that isn't your suit It's just like—

*Brown* It's his! We're getting to be like twins I'm inheriting his clothes already! [Calming himself as he sees how frightened she is] Don't be worried, dear I'm just a trifle elated, now the job's done I guess I'm a bit soused on life, too!

[The COMMITTEE, three important-looking, average personages, come into the drafting room]

*Margaret* [forcing a smile] Well, don't let it burn your insides out!

*Brown* No danger! Mine were tempered in hell! Hahaha!

*Margaret* [kissing him, coaxingly] Come home, dear—please!

*Older Draftsman* [knocking on the door] The Committee is here, Mr Brown

*Brown* [hurriedly to MARGARET] You receive them Hand them the design I'll get Brown [He raises his voice] Come right in, gentlemen

[He goes into the room at the right, as the COMMITTEE enter the office When they see MARGARET, they stop in surprise]

*Margaret* [embarrassedly] Good afternoon Mr Brown will be right with you [They bow MARGARET holds out the design to them]

This is my husband's design He finished it today

*Committee* Ah! [They crowd around to look at it—with enthusiasm] Perfect! Splendid! Couldn't be better! Exactly what we suggested!

*Margaret* [joyfully] Then you accept it? Mr Anthony will be so pleased!

*Member* Mr Anthony?

*Another* Is he working here again?

*Thurd* Did I understand you to say this was your husband's design?

*Margaret* [excitedly] Yes! Entirely his! He's worked like a dog— [Appalled] you don't mean to say—Mr Brown never told you?

[They shake their heads in solemn surprise]

Oh, the contemptible cad! I hate him!

*Brown* [appearing at right—mockingly] Hate me, Margaret? Hate Brown? How



superfluous! [*Oratorically*] Gentlemen, I have been keeping a secret from you in order that you might be the more impressed when I revealed it. That design is entirely the inspiration of Mr. Dion Anthony's genius. I had nothing to do with it.

Margaret [*contritely*]. Oh, Billy! I'm sorry! Forgive me!

[BROWN, ignoring her, takes the plan from the COMMITTEE, and begins unpinning it from the board]

Brown [*mockingly*]. I can see by your faces you have approved this. You are delighted, aren't you? And why not, my dear sirs? Look at it, and look at you! Hahaha! It'll immortalize you, my good men! You'll be as death-defying a joke as any in Joe Miller! [*With a sudden complete change of tone—angrily*] You damn fools! Can't you see this is an insult—a terrible, blasphemous insult!—that this embittered failure Anthony is hurling in the teeth of our success—an insult to you, to me, to you, Margaret—and to Almighty God! [*In a frenzy of fury*] And if you are weak and cowardly enough to stand for it, I'm not!

[*He tears the plan into four pieces. The COMMITTEE stands aghast. MARGARET runs forward.*]

Margaret [*in a scream*]. You coward! Dion! Dion! [*She picks up the plan and hugs it to her bosom.*]

Brown [*with a sudden goatish caper*]. I'll tell him you're here.

[*He disappears, but reappears almost immediately in the mask of DION. He is imposing a terrible discipline on himself to avoid dancing and laughing. He speaks suavely.*]

Everything is all right—all for the best—you mustn't get excited! A little paste, Margaret! A little paste, gentlemen! And all will be well! Life is imperfect, Brothers. Men have their faults, Sister! But with a few drops of glue much may be done! A little dab of pasty resignation here and there—and even broken hearts may be repaired to do yeoman service!

[*He has edged toward the door. They are all staring at him with petrified bewilderment. He puts his finger to his lips.*]

Ssssh! This is Daddy's bedtime secret for today. Man is born broken. He lives by mending. The grace of God is glue!

[*With a quick prancing movement, he has opened the door, gone through, and closed it after him silently, shaking with suppressed laughter. He springs lightly to the side of the petrified DRAFTSMEN and speaks in a whisper.*]

They will find him in the little room. Mr. William Brown is dead!

[*With light leaps he vanishes, his head thrown back, shaking with silent laughter. The sound of his feet leaping down the stairs, five at a time, can be heard. Then a pause of silence. The people in the two rooms stare. The YOUNGER DRAFTSMAN is the first to recover.*]

Younger Draftsman [*rushing into the next room, and shouting in terrified tones*]. Mr. Brown is dead!

Committee. He murdered him!

[*They all run into the little room on the right. MARGARET remains, stunned with horror. They return in a moment, carrying the mask of WILLIAM BROWN, two on each side, as if they were carrying a body by the legs and shoulders. They solemnly lay him down on the couch and stand looking down at him.*]

First Committeeman [*with a frightened awe*]. I can't believe he's gone.

Second Committeeman [*in the same tone*]. I can almost hear him talking. [*As if impelled, he clears his throat and addresses the mask importantly.*] Mr. Brown—[*He stops short.*]

Third Committeeman [*shrinking back*]. No. Dead, all right! [*Suddenly, hysterically angry and terrified.*] We must take steps at once to run Anthony to earth!

Margaret [*with a heart-broken cry*]. Dion's innocent!

Younger Draftsman. I'll phone for the police, sir! [*He rushes to the phone.*]

## SCENE TWO

The library of WILLIAM BROWN's home. The mask of DION stands on the table beneath the light, facing front.

On his knees beside the table, facing front, stripped naked except for a white cloth around his loins, is BROWN. The clothes he has torn off in his agony are scattered on the floor. His eyes, his arms,

his whole body strain upward, his muscles writhe with his lips as they pray silently in their agonized supplication. Finally a voice seems torn out of him

Brown Mercy, Compassionate Savior of Man! Out of my depths I cry to you! Mercy on thy poor clod, thy clot of unhallowed earth, thy clay, the Great God Brown! Mercy, Savior! *[He seems to wait for an answer—then leaping to his feet he puts out one hand to touch the mask like a frightened child reaching out for its nurse's hand—then speaks with immediate mocking despair]* Bah! I am sorry, little children, but your kingdom is empty. God has become disgusted and moved away to some far ecstatic star where life is a dancing flame! We must die without him *[Addressing the mask—harshly]* Together, my friend! You, too! Let Margaret suffer! Let the whole world suffer as I am suffering!

*[There is a sound of a door being pushed violently open, padding feet in slippers, and CYBEL, wearing her mask, runs into the room. She stops short on seeing BROWN and the mask, and stares from one to the other for a second in confusion. She is dressed in a black kimono robe and wears slippers over her bare feet. Her yellow hair hangs down in a great mane over her shoulders. She has grown stouter, has more of the deep objective calm of an idol.]*

Brown *[staring at her—fascinated—with great peace as if her presence comforted him]* Cybel! I was coming to you! How did you know?

*[CYBEL takes off her mask and looks from BROWN to the DION mask, now with great understanding]*

Cybel So that's why you never came to me again! You are Dion Brown!

Brown *[bitterly]* I am the remains of William Brown! *[He points to the mask of Dion]* I am his murderer and his murdered!

Cybel *[with a laugh of exasperated pity]* Oh, why can't you ever learn to leave yourselves alone and leave me alone!

Brown *[boyishly and naively]* I am Billy

Cybel *[immediately, with a motherly solicitude]* Then run, Billy, run! They are hunting for someone! They came to my

place, hunting for a murderer, Dion! They must find a victim! They've got to quiet their fears, to cast out their devils, or they'll never sleep soundly again! They've got to absolve themselves by finding a guilty one! They've got to kill someone now, to live! You're naked! You must be Satan! Run, Billy, run! They'll come here! I ran here to warn—someone! So run away if you want to live!

Brown *[like a sulky child]*. I'm too tired I don't want to

Cybel *[with motherly calm]* All right, you needn't, Billy. Don't sulk *[As a noise comes from outside]* Anyway, it's too late I hear them in the garden now

*[BROWN, listening, puts out his hand and takes the mask of DION]*

Brown *[mockingly, as he gains strength]* Thanks for this one last favor, Dion! Listen! Your avengers! Standing on your grave in the garden! Hahaha! *[He puts on the mask and springs to the left and makes a gesture as if flinging French windows open. Gayly mocking]* Welcome, dumb worshippers! I am your great God Brown! I have been advised to run from you, but it is my almighty whim to dance into escape over your prostrate souls!

*[Shouts are heard from the garden and a volley of shots. BROWN staggers back and falls on the floor by the couch, mortally wounded. CYBEL runs to his side, lifts him on to the couch, and takes off the mask of DION]*

Cybel You can't take this to bed with you. You've got to go to sleep alone

*[She places the mask of DION back on its stand under the light and puts on her own, just as, after a banging of doors, crashing of glass, trampling of feet, a Squad of Police with drawn revolvers, led by a grizzly, brutal-faced CAPTAIN, run into the room. They are followed by MARGARET, still distractedly clutching the pieces of the plan to her breast]*

Captain *[pointing to the mask of DION—triumphantly]* Got him! He's dead!

*[MARGARET throws herself on her knees, takes the mask, and kisses it]*

Margaret *[heart-brokenly]* Dion! Dion! *[Her face hidden in her arms, the mask in her hands above her bowed head, she remains, sobbing with deep, silent grief]*

Captain *[noticing CYBEL and BROWN—*

startled] Hey! Look at this! What're you doin' here? Who's he?

*Cybel* You ought to know You croaked him!

*Captain* [with a defensive snarl—hastily] It was Anthony! I saw his mug! This feller's an accomplice, I bet yuh! Serves him right! Who is he? Friend o' yours! Crook! What's his name? Tell me or I'll fix yuh!

*Cybel* Billy

*Captain* Billy what?

*Cybel* I don't know He's dying [Suddenly] Leave me alone with him, and maybe I'll get him to squeal it

*Captain* Yuh better! I got to have a clean report I'll give yuh a couple o' minutes

[He motions to the Policemen, who follow him out *CYBEL* takes off her mask and sits down by *BROWN*'s head He makes an effort to raise himself toward her, and she helps him, throwing her kimono over his bare body, drawing his head on to her shoulder]

*Brown* [snuggling against her—gratefully] The earth is warm

*Cybel* [soothingly, looking before her like an idol] Sssh! Go to sleep, Billy

*Brown* Yes, Mother [Explainingly] It was dark, and I couldn't see where I was going, and they all picked on me

*Cybel* I know You're tired

*Brown* And when I wake up . . . ?

*Cybel* The sun will be rising again

*Brown* To judge the living and the dead! [Frightenedly] I don't want justice I want love

*Cybel* There is only love

*Brown* Thank you, Mother [Feebly] I'm getting sleepy What's the prayer you taught me? Our Father

*Cybel* [with calm exultance] Our Father Who Art!

*Brown* [taking her tone—exultantly] Who art! Who art! [Suddenly—with ecstasy] I know! I have found Him! I hear Him speak! "Blessed are they that weep, for they shall laugh!" Only he that has wept can laugh! The laughter of Heaven sows earth with a rain of tears, and out of Earth's transfigured birth-pain the laughter of Man returns to bless and play again in innumerable dancing gales of flame upon the knees of God! [He dies]

[*CYBEL* gets up and fixes his body on the couch She bends down and kisses

him gently She straightens up and looks into space, with profound pain]

*Cybel* Always spring comes again bearing life! Always again! Always, always forever again!—Spring again!—life again!—summer and fall and death and peace again! [With agonized sorrow] But always, always, love and conception and birth and pain again—spring bearing the intolerable chalice of life again!—[Then with agonized exultance] bearing the glorious, blazing crown of life again! [She stands like an idol of Earth, her eyes staring out over the world]

*Margaret* [lifting her head adoringly to the mask—triumphant tenderness mingled with her grief] My lover! My husband! My boy! [She kisses the mask] Good-by Thank you for happiness! And you're not dead, sweetheart! You can never die till my heart dies! You will live forever! You will sleep under my heart! I will feel you stirring in your sleep, forever under my heart!

[She kisses the mask again There is a pause The *CAPTAIN* comes just into sight at the left and speaks toward the front without looking at *MARGARET* and *CYBEL*]

*Captain* [gruffly] Well, what's his name?

*Cybel* Man!

*Captain* [taking a grimy notebook and an inch-long pencil from his pocket] How d'yuh spell it?

## EPILOGUE

Four years later The same spot on the same dock as in the Prologue on another moonlight night in June The sound of the waves and of distant dance music is heard

*MARGARET* and her *THREE SONS* appear from the right The eldest is now eighteen All are dressed in the height of correct Prep-school elegance They are all tall, athletic, strong, and handsome-looking They loom up around the slight figure of their mother like protecting giants, giving her a strange aspect of lonely, detached, small femininity She wears her mask of the proud, indulgent Mother She has grown appreciably older Her hair is now a beautiful gray There is about her manner and voice the sad but contented feeling of one

*who knows her life-purpose well accomplished but is at the same time a bit empty and comfortless with the finality of it She is wrapped in a gray cloak*

*Elders* Doesn't Bee look beautiful to-night, Mother?

*Next* Don't you think Mabel's the best dancer in there, Mother?

*Youngest* Aw, Alice has them both beat, hasn't she, Mother?

*Margaret* [with a sad little laugh] Each of you is right [With strange finality] Good-by, boys

*Boys* [surprised] Good-by

*Margaret* It was here on a night just like this your father first proposed to me Did you ever know that?

*Boys* [embarrassedly] No

*Margaret* [yearningly] But the nights now are so much colder than they used to be Think of it, I went in moonlight-bathing in June when I was a girl It was so warm and beautiful in those days I remember the Junes when I was carrying you boys

[There is a pause They fidget uneasily She asks pleadingly]

Promise me faithfully never to forget your father!

*Boys* [uncomfortably] Yes, Mother

*Margaret* [forcing a joking tone] But you

mustn't waste June on an old woman like me! Go in and dance

[They hesitate dutifully]

Go on I really want to be alone—with my Junes

*Boys* [unable to conceal their eagerness]

Yes, Mother [They go away]

[MARGARET slowly removes her mask, laying it on the bench, and stares up at the moon with a wistful, resigned sweetness]

*Margaret* So long ago! And yet I'm still the same Margaret It's only our lives that grow old We are where centuries only count as seconds and after a thousand lives our eyes begin to open—[She looks around her with a rapt smile] and the moon rests in the sea! I want to feel the moon at peace in the sea! I want Dion to leave the sky for me! I want him to sleep in the tides of my heart! [She slowly takes from under her cloak, from her bosom, as if from her heart, the mask of DION as it was at the last and holds it before her face] My lover! My husband! My boy! You can never die till my heart dies! You will live forever! You are sleeping under my heart! I feel you stirring in your sleep, forever under my heart [She kisses him on the lips with a timeless kiss]

THE END



**THE FIELD GOD**

**By PAUL GREEN**

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lishers of the original version, Robert M.  
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## PAUL GREEN AND HIS PLAYS

PAUL GREEN was born near Lillington, North Carolina, in 1894. He is the son of a farmer and spent most of the first twenty years of his life working on a farm and, incidentally, getting to know and understand the kinds of persons, white and black, that he puts into his plays. After irregular schooling, he was graduated from a neighboring academy when he was twenty years old, taught school for two years, and entered the University of North Carolina in 1916. From 1917 to 1919 he was in the army and saw service in France, entering as private and leaving as second lieutenant. He returned to the university, was graduated in 1921, took post-graduate work at both North Carolina and Cornell, and now teaches philosophy at his alma mater.

While he was a student at the university, Green took the course in playwriting given by Professor Frederick H. Koch, the director of the Carolina Playmakers, and this gave him perhaps the impulse, certainly the encouragement, to express in terms of drama what was doubtless a deep-seated and native interest. He is primarily a "folk" dramatist, and belongs with those who exploit new fields. His own field, especially, is that of the rural white people and the negroes of his own state. First made generally known by his one-act play of negro character *The No 'Count Boy*, which won the Belasco trophy at the Little Theatre Tournament in New York in 1925, he gained national celebrity in 1927, when his play *In Abraham's Bosom* won the Pulitzer prize. His five long plays and over thirty one-act plays include perhaps every type known to present-day drama—farce, travesty, comedy, fantasy, melodrama, tragedy, in many moods, and by methods that range from pure naturalism to pure fantasy. Many of these are evidently experimental, several are reminiscent of the work of other dramatists, but still others are as utterly original in both subject and treatment as any plays yet written in America.

All of these plays, whether short or long, come from direct observation and are redolent of the soil. Like Eugene O'Neill, Green is a close observer, is utterly sincere, is interested in surfaces only as these reveal underlying motives and meanings, insists upon expressing himself in his own way, and, equally with O'Neill, refuses to pander to an audience. Aside from all this, he has the insight into character and the sympathy and imagination of a poet, and he has a fairly sure sense of dramatic situation. His technique is flexible and free, though not always sure—loose ends are not lacking, sometimes he is guilty of a labored speech that does not ring quite true, sometimes his action, and even his ideas, are unnecessarily clogged with words. His style would, in general, gain through condensation. The words in themselves, however, are almost always expressive, and often his dialogue is excellent.

*The Field God* is a folk drama informed with a philosophic idea, but an idea that does not obtrude itself, since it is an essential part of the action and the characters. Admirably suggested is the atmosphere, with its sense appeals of the soil, its poetry drawn from the seasons and the weather and the crops, the hearing, sight, smell, and general sense of rural things. The struggle between the two opposing points of view in religion, the sharp and bitter conflict that results from such opposition when the death fight is on, makes the play powerful and essential drama. And all this is embodied in Hardy Gilchrist. But perhaps no less remarkable is the author's sympathy with the orthodox religionists and the kindly yet penetrating insight that he shows in the portrayal of Etta. *The Field God* was first produced in New York, on April 21, 1927. It was produced in London on September 20, 1927.



*Gilchrist [breaking into a loud, boyish laugh and looking around]* You have that You've slayed the crab-grass this day, my boy That bottom corn's a-rearing in its tracks

*Neill [taking a plug of tobacco from his pocket and biting off a chew]* I bet so

*Gilchrist* Grow! It'll grow if we have rain [*Teasingly*] In a few years, Neill, maybe you'll be able to keep sight of me in the field [*Laughing again*] You're a little young and tender yet [*Bringing his hand down on the table so that the dishes rattle and LONIE drops her bone*] Go to it, you Mag and Lonie! Tomorrow's another day, and you'll need all you can hold

*Mag* Lord, Mr Hardy, looks like you'd be tired adder your day's work You're spry as a young gander

*Gilchrist* Tired! Take all the mules in Black River township to plow me down Mag, you're getting old, old like a frost-bit 'simmon

*Mag* G'wan, Mr Hardy, allus a-teasing Old? Muh lived to be ninety I got forty year to go yit

*Gilchrist* Yeh, I hope sixty—seventy, for that matter, Mag I wish you could live forever— [*firmly*] wish all of us could

[*He lapses into silence and sits drumming on the table MRS GILCHRIST glances sharply at him He looks up*] You're looking well tonight, Etta

*Mrs Gilchrist* Thank you

*Gilchrist [kindly]* You will go on working

*Mrs Gilchrist* I shan't have so much to do now when Rhoda comes

*Mag* Mr Hardy, you better go up to Raleigh and git Mis' Etta one o' old Miss Smith's plasters That'll bring whatever it is gnawing in her to a head

*Mrs Gilchrist* I don't trust doctors or plasters, Mag

*Gilchrist* No, she don't

[*As if stung by some untoward remembrance, he stands up and walks out on the porch In the lamplight his face and figure are visible He is a tall, well-built man of thirty-five or forty, broad-shouldered and powerfully muscled His face is etched and lined with the marks of exposure to rain and wind and sun From beneath the grimness of his manner and the will that shows in his countenance a*

*sort of irrepressible boyishness now and then breaks through He goes to the water-shelf at the end of the porch and takes a drink of water With the dipper in his hand he stares at the west and then up at the sky above*]

*Neill* Looks right nice—out there

*Gilchrist* Looks dry, though. No sign of falling weather

*Neill [spitting in the yard]* Hanh, not much But that snake I hung up in the bottom may fetch it

*Gilchrist [going into the kitchen and returning with a cheroot, which he lights]* I'd like to see them cotton rows out there standing full of water, Neill Have a smoke? [*He sits down on the edge of the porch before the kitchen door*]

*Neill* 'Twould be fine, shore. We need it—No a-thanky

[*In the dining-room MAG and LONIE continue their eating MRS GILCHRIST sits with her chin resting on her hand, gazing vacantly before her*]

*Gilchrist* I heard raincrows hollering this morning, too

*Neill* Mought 'a' been a' old turkle-dove

*Gilchrist* A raincrow's call is sharper

*Neill* Yeh

[*He leans his head wearily against a porch column GILCHRIST looks at him slyly*]

*Gilchrist [chuckling]* Tired, Neill?

*Neill [jerking up his head]* Hunh—me? No, sir-ee

*Gilchrist* Tired?

*Neill* Well, a fellow do get sorter sleepy-like adder a heavy meal

*Gilchrist* Come on, now, you're broke down, ain't you?

*Neill* This here has been a hard day Hot! Lord, you could cook a egg in the furrow about two o'clock Yeh, I'll give in, Mr Hardy, you just about plowed me to death today

*Gilchrist [gleefully]* That so? Come on, come on, a great big fellow like you let an old man kill him at work And I'd already sided half a' acre when you got to the fields this morning

*Neill* "Old fellow," the dog's foot! You ain't old

*Gilchrist [mockingly]* Old, old, I am Why, I can remember back and 'way, 'way back

*Neill* You ain't forty yit.

Gilchrist Don't lack but a year of it,  
Neill And you ain't but twenty-five

Neill Twenty-six, 'cording to Muh's Bible

Gilchrist Just a boy [*Reaching playfully over and touching NEILL's cheek*] Hunh, he ain't never stropped his razor yet

Neill [*grinning*] Pshaw! my beards grow worse'n a turkey gobbler's

[GILCHRIST suddenly tumbles over from the porch in a handspring He jumps to his feet shuffling a ng]

Mag [*having pushed herself back from the table along with LONIE*] Lord, Lord, listen to Mr Hardy out there

Mrs Gilchrist [*still looking before her*] Mag, I wish you wouldn't use the Lord's name that-a-way

Mag But he's jest sich a case

Gilchrist Can you do that, Neill?

Neill I ain't no good at tricks

Gilchrist [*spitting*]. Tricks! [*Exercising his arms*] Muscle power, Neill [*Slapping himself*] In here and here and here I hope it'll be a hundred year giving out [*Soberly*] But threescore and ten is all we're promised, Neill, and most of the time them promises don't hold good at that, do they? [*Rising suddenly and going to the dining-room door*] Mag, you and Lonie clean up the dishes, Mis' Etta's tired out tonight

Mrs Gilchrist No, no, they've chopped cotton hard all day I'll wash the dishes

Gilchrist No, let them wash 'em I'll add a little extry to your day's pay, Mag [*Gently*] Come and sit out on the porch a while, Etta That dining-room's hot as a furnace [*He takes a chair out for her*]

Mag Yeh, we'll wash the dishes, Mis' Etta

[MRS GILCHRIST rises and lights a lamp from a table in the corner and passes through a partition door into the kitchen Through the open kitchen porch door a cupboard, stove, and cooking utensils are seen MAG and LONIE begin clearing away the dishes and going into the kitchen with them MRS GILCHRIST throws a shawl over her shoulders, comes out on the porch, and sits down]

Gilchrist Etta, I wish you wouldn't work at that hot stove the way you do Wish you'd quit it

Mrs Gilchrist Nobody else to

Gilchrist I can get Sandy's gal back if you'd let me

Mrs Gilchrist I don't want that Negro girl in the same house with me

Gilchrist Why?

Mrs Gilchrist I believe she steals—and—and—she's low-down—

Gilchrist. The first I've ever heard—well—

Mrs Gilchrist [*hurriedly*] But now that Rhoda's coming from Durham to live with us, I won't need any help We can get along

Neill When's she coming, Mis' Etta?

Mrs Gilchrist Any time now

Gilchrist [*striking his thigh with his fist*]. Great goodness!

Mrs Gilchrist Hardy! [*She watches GILCHRIST*]

Gilchrist [*standing up and walking back and forth in the yard*] Nothing, Etta [*He goes to the left of the end of the house and stands gazing out at his growing cotton*] Be having blooms out there, Neill, before the nineteenth of June Grown squares on it now

Neill Boll weevils'll be stirring soon, too

Mrs Gilchrist We got a letter in the mail yesterday from Rhoda, and she said she'd come soon's she could get her poor mother's things straightened out She may come tomorrow or next day or she may not come till next week I wouldn't have been surprised to see her come today

Neill Wonder how she'll take to the farm?

Gilchrist [*turning back into the yard*] Nohow, that's how Anybody's been living in a town all their life won't be any use out here, I guess

Mrs Gilchrist She seemed to like the farm that time—wanted to milk the cows, drive the teams—

Gilchrist I remember she got out once and chopped up a whole row of corn [*Laughing*] Little old skinny thing! Didn't seem strong enough to hold a hoe

Neill Bet it'll be lonesome for her here

Gilchrist She won't find no bathtubs and shining lights here, and great crowds jostling and jamming No, she won't by a long sight I give her a week to learn there's just one place she hates worse'n a farm

Neill What place is that, Mr Hardy?—Hah—hah!

Gilchrist It's the place Etta and the good folks around here say I'm going to when I die

*Mrs Gilchrist Hardy!*

*Gilchrist [with a touch of coldness]* Yes Well, never mind

*Neill* Reckon I'll be right there trying to fire the b'ilers fast as you 'Twouldn't seem natural if we weren't trying to outdo each other

*Mrs Gilchrist Neill!*

*Neill* Course, Mis' Etta, we hadn't ort to joke about Scripture matters, I reckon

*Gilchrist [sitting again on the edge of the porch and puffing his cheroot]* People joke about everything one time or another, Neill—joke and talk

*Mrs Gilchrist* Some of 'em do

*Neill* Yeh, folks like to talk

*Gilchrist* And talk about each other [*Smiling grimly*] How much you reckon they've talked about me, for instance?

*Neill* Pshaw! People swear by you up and down the country, Mr Hardy

*Gilchrist [ironically]* Thank you, Neill

*Mrs Gilchrist* They respect you everywhere, Hardy, except your religious notions

*Gilchrist* Now take old Jacob Alford He's a good soul He prays in church, he shouts at revivals and a few times has dropped into trances praying over sinners Yet he has started talk on me and everybody else he can

*Mag [coming to the kitchen door]* Nobody ever believes what old Jacob says

*Neill* Say not His tongue's a sight longer'n his head

*Gilchrist [fixing NEILL with his eye]* But people are queer, Neill, queer They look up to me around here, do they? I'm honest, I work hard, I've accumulated property—some And yet half this neighborhood would be glad to hear tomorrow I'd done something awful It's not because I don't join in with 'em at the church and sing, and shout at meeting and be like the rest of 'em You know what's in folks, Neill, that makes 'em like that?

*Neill [shaking his head]* No, sir-ee Can't make head or tails of it when you git to talking deep

*Gilchrist* You see, Neill, most people like to talk about things—something to interest 'em Deep down they ain't Christian, Jew er Gentile, black er white, but just people [*Spitting on the ground*] They want something to talk about, something to interest 'em, I say It ain't their fault—it's just that way

*Mag [going back to her dishes]* You hear that, Lonie?

[*LODIE nods her head*]

*Neill* I reckon you're right, Mr Hardy

*Gilchrist [picking up a stick and beginning to mark on the ground]* That's how I've figgered it out—Ah, funny!

*Neill [after a long silence]* I saw something that interested me once

*Gilchrist [teasing]* You know you didn't, Neill

*Neill* I did, too

[*MAG comes to the door and listens*  
*LODIE washes away automaton-like at the dishes inside*]

That time I carried a load of tobacco up to Durham for the old man Talking about Rhoda and her coming from Durham made me think of it Adder I sold my tobacco that day, it was late at night, and I was coming out from town Just as I got clost to the Malbourne Hotel, I never heard sich a racket of music and horns a-blowing and drums a-going it inside It was music to beat the band Never heard nothing fine as that before Tell you what, it made the natchel hair qule up on the back of my neck What'd I do but drive off in a side street and hitch my mules and go back there and ast a man all dressed up in a uniform at the door if I could git inside He didn't say nary a word, jest motioned me in I went inside a big waiting-room and stood, Lord, I don't know how long, looking through a glass door at the goings-on in another big room, bigger'n the whole end of this house here And there was men and women cutting up in there, kicking their heels, sashaying and promenading up and down same as they was wild And dresses! A plumb millionaire's fortune was walking on that floor The men was all diked out in white shirts as stiff as a' arning-board down to their belly-band, and shoes you could see yourself in. And their claw-hammer coats hung 'way, 'way down behind

*Gilchrist [laughing like a boy]* And the women, how were they dressed, Neill?

*Neill [waving his hand]* I'm jest gitting to them The women—some of 'em had gray hair, but they looked like young girls—they was dressed like a wedding, and they didn't have much on above their waists but little strips over their shoulders and enough to hide things Behind they

was as bare as the pa'm of my hand—down, well, low down

Mrs Gilchrist Neill!

Neill I'm telling what happened, Mis' Etta It ain't my fault how they dressed Some of 'em had on little gold shoes Mag there couldn't git her big toe in, and silver shoes and satin and I don't know what all And 'most every one of 'em had a bunch of flowers at their waists big as a slop-bucket Their cheeks was red and their teeth white as snow, and they was plumb purty as angels

Mrs Gilchrist They were painted hus-sies, every one of 'em!

Neill [staring at her] I'm sorry, Mis' Etta

Mrs Gilchrist [twisting her shawl around her] It's so

[MRS GILCHRIST is silent Presently NEILL goes on]

Neill Well, I reckon I'd 'a' been there yit if the thing hadn't busted up And I couldn't git that music out'n my head for a month or two Fact is, it ain't out, even to this day [He hums reminiscently] Ta-ta, ta-ta

Gilchrist [to the others, laughingly] Told you Neill was a great ladies' man

Neill Pshaw, Mr Hardy!

Gilchrist Remember what I said—find a willing little girl, and I'll help you buy your farm

Neill [embarrassed] I am't studyng no girl

Mag [from the door] I got it—Miss Rhody and Neill!

Gilchrist Ho-ho! He seems to like the town girls

Mag Wonder if Miss Rhody'll be like one of them painted women [She bursts into a loud laugh]

Mrs Gilchrist That she won't Sister Minnie knew how to raise her, I'll give her credit for that

Mag Bet she'll be a lot o' company to you, Mis' Etta

Mrs Gilchrist I hope so

Gilchrist [presently] Yeh, I hope she'll be able to play the organ in there and help you sing your hymns, Etta

Mrs Gilchrist [shyly] That'd be fine

Neill I reckon she's about grown now, ain't she?

Mrs Gilchrist She was twelve or thirteen when she was down here visiting, and that's been ten years ago

Gilchrist Has? Goodness, don't seem more'n four or five at the most

Mrs Gilchrist Time seems longer to some folks and shorter to others

Gilchrist [looking at her kindly] Yeh, yeh, I know it does, Etta [Turning towards the kitchen and calling] Mag, bring that lamp out'n the dining-room, if you don't mind Getting a little dark out here

[He goes to the tree in the front of the yard and gets a tub and takes it to the well He then draws a bucket of water, pours it in, and takes it back to the porch MAG brings the lamp out and sets it on the water-shelf By this time dusk has come on and the fields have become filled with a blue nebulous shade GILCHRIST sets his tub down and begins taking off his shoes MAG and LONIE come from the kitchen, wearing their flat bonnets, and sit farther up the porch, dipping their snuff They are barefooted GILCHRIST pours dirt out of his shoes and stares at the sky]

See that, Neill?

Neill [jerking his head again from the post] I didn't see nothing

Gilchrist A little wink of lightning right below the North Star

Neill Where?

Gilchrist [laughing] To the north [Pointing] Look, there it goes again That means rain, Neill, rain in forty-eight hours That'll hit us just right—cotton and corn!—according to the old saying

Mag [to LONIE] Look, Lonie, there goes the lightning again Rainy weather coming on and you can rest

Gilchrist [taking off his other shoe and pouring out the dirt] The moon quarters day after tomorrow

[Suddenly in the trees behind the house the katydids burst into a floody chattering]

And there goes them June bugs singing their heads off in the maples Hot nights and June bugs and rain, what more can crops want? [Pointing up into the sky at an angle of about forty degrees] See there, Neill, how the Great Dipper is tipped up on its edge? [With a child-like snugness in his voice] It'll be pouring out water soon You'n' me better clean that bottom corn on the creek tomorrow

Neill Thought you laughed at me yistiddy for talking o' signs

Gilchrist I don't believe 'em—[*laughing*] but then they used to work for my daddy and it gives us something to talk about—hah-hah!

Neill Is that dipper the one old man Jacob says fell out of the north the year of the earthquake? [*Softly*] Oh, ho! I believe in 'em myself

Gilchrist The same, except it didn't fall

Lonie [*in a sudden, sharp, husky little voice*] Reckon Ol' Moster lives out there 'mongst them stars?

Mrs Gilchrist God lives there in heaven beyond the stars His power is everywhere, Lonie—in you and me and in them fields out there—everywhere

[GILCHRIST pulls off his socks, rolls up his trouser legs, and begins washing his feet in the tub]

He made everything that creepeth, everything that flies, everything to glorify his holy name Yea, and everything must come to judgment before him

Mag [*hurriedly*] Yes, Mis' Etta

Neill And he made them four idiot women in the poorhouse, Mag?

Gilchrist Never mind, Neill

Mrs Gilchrist You and Lonie musn't forget to say your prayers, Mag Do you?

Mag I dunno hardly—mebbe so I dunno Ask Lonie

Lonie [*with a dry cough*] Did he make the poor and the rich, Mis' Etta, some to live easy, some to live hard?

Mrs Gilchrist He made all things, Lonie

Lonie [*her voice dying in a wheezy sigh*] I reckon he did Sump'n made it

[*She bows her head under her bonnet and says no more GILCHRIST finishes rinsing his feet and props them up on the side of the tub to dry*]

Gilchrist Neill, I wish you'd step by the barn and give the mules some more water A hot night like this they need it

Neill All right, sir

Mag [*standing up*] Time for you'n' me to be gitting up the road along home, Lonie

[LONIE gets to her feet, and she and

MAG go across the yard to the left]

Gilchrist See you all tomorrow bright and early We'll have breakfast on the dot, Mag

[LONIE suddenly stubs her foot as she goes across the yard]

Look out, Lonie, you'll hurt yourself again

Mag Her eyes run water so lately she can't hardly see how to travel

Gilchrist Yeh, yeh

[LONIE limps on off around the house without a word]

Mag She ain't hurt See you all tomorrow if nothing happens

Gilchrist Yeh

Neill [*getting up*] Believe I'll mosey along too, Mr Hardy

Gilchrist All right, Neill Catch a good night's sleep [*Laughing*] You'll need it tomorrow I want you to work my tongue out down on that creek

Neill [*going around the end of the house*] Can't be done I give up Good night Good night, Mis' Etta

Mrs Gilchrist Good night

Gilchrist [*sitting down on the porch again*] Poor old Lonie She's suffered and been hurt till the pore soul's petrified And asking about Old Moster out there in the stars!

Mrs Gilchrist Lonie and Mag both have a lot to answer to before their God They've been bad women in their young days

Gilchrist Etta, sometimes I think you've got too much religion The Old Squire Morgan et up Lonie's looks and strength all the years of his life and then threw her off like a nigger's shoe in a fence-jamb

Mrs Gilchrist And now she's paying for her living in sin

Gilchrist Anyhow, it's most over now Lonie won't be good for many more summers' work

Mrs Gilchrist Yes, she'd better get ready to go

Gilchrist God better get ready to receive her

Mrs Gilchrist [*crying out*] Don't talk like that, I tell you

Gilchrist [*brushing the dirt from his feet*] All right I'm done Yeh, maybe you and the preachers are right I am a blaspheming man—I'm an infidel, I'm lost

Mrs Gilchrist [*sadly*] Some day, Hardy, it'll come to you in a great light You see through a glass darkly now, then face to face [*Bowing her head in her shawl*] I've prayed and prayed it would

Gilchrist Now, Etta, never mind me

Mrs Gilchrist [*drying her eyes*] Still, let's don't fall out, Hardy

Gilchrist [*reassuringly*] Sure we won't.

[*Buoyantly*] We have our ups and downs like other folks, but as long as we pull together, we'll get along

Mrs Gilchrist Yes, everything'll come out for the best It's promised to us in the Bible

Gilchrist Them promises—[*He bites his lip and refrains*] I tell you what, Etta, I was a-thinking as I plowed along today that if something happened to me before Mag and Lonie passed out, I'd want 'em provided for so's they wouldn't suffer As long as I live, I'll see to 'em

Mrs Gilchrist You'll be here many a day after they're gone to the churchyard

Gilchrist You never can tell Yes, I'd want you to see to 'em I'll do for 'em what that cussed old Morgan ought to have done

Mrs Gilchrist Yes, yes

[*They are silent a moment, each with his and her own thought*]

Gilchrist I've worked and saved to accumulate something and—well, there's nobody to leave it to after we're gone

[MRS GILCHRIST makes no reply, and they sit for a moment again in silence Presently he turns and looks toward the west]

Look at the evening star there, Etta, shining through them pines, big as a young moon I've heard it said that the evening star is the same as the morning star

[MRS GILCHRIST suddenly breaks into low sobs]

What's the matter? [*He rises and comes over to her*] Stop it now Don't cry Now you feel bad Go on to bed, tomorrow you'll be all right

Mrs Gilchrist No, no I'll never be all right any more [*She catches his hand and holds it*] I was sitting there at the table and hearing you talk and laugh and play out here, and it come all over me of a sudden how old I am and you so young

Gilchrist Why, we're the same age, Etta!

Mrs Gilchrist No, I'm old, old enough for your mother

[*There is the noise of a buggy on the road before the house*]

Gilchrist Now, that's all right [*He pats her shoulder*] I think that was a buggy out there Somebody's talking

[*He listens Presently hoofbeats are heard going up the lane*]

No, I guess they've gone on, whoever it is You've got nothing to feel bad about, Etta

Fifteen years you've been a faithful wife I'd never been able to make what I have without you

Mrs Gilchrist What's to be will be, anyhow But I've been worthless to you I've been a barren fig tree, fit only for casting in the fire

Gilchrist [*Jerking his hand from her and walking up and down the porch*] You can't help it [*He sits suddenly down on the porch, running his hand through his thick hair and patting his foot nervously on the round In a moment he goes on quietly*] God says in his great Book that he made the sun and the moon and the stars and the light of the firmament above And he made man, he says in his own image and set him a king among all things Look at Lonie—ground down to the bottom like the dirt I plow in Ain't she a human being? Ain't everyone that suffers part of that race and tribe called man? Still they pray to him, not knowing that he never answers Still pray and cry to him [*Throwing out his hands in a gesture of dismissal*] And in the night he is silent and in the day speaks not a word Where is this God? [*Softly*] Nowhere

Mrs Gilchrist [*vehemently*] I know that my Redeemer liveth, and I'll trust him though he slay me There's the Word for it

Gilchrist Poor Aunt Margaret has trusted in him all the days of her life, and she's never known nothing but suffering If she'd gone to work trusting in her own might—ah, it would have been different

Mrs Gilchrist I've got to believe in him I couldn't live without it, and Aunt Margaret couldn't live without it

Gilchrist Well, let's stop Talking won't change it either way

Mrs Gilchrist If suffering came upon you, you'd believe the way I do

Gilchrist [*stroking her hand gently and speaking as if to a child*] Maybe—maybe so

Mrs Gilchrist And some day you will

[*They are both silent Suddenly out of the darkness at the left a young girl appears, carrying a cheap suitcase She speaks in a soft voice*]

Girl Good evening, you all

Gilchrist [*looking up in astonishment*] Good evening, ma'am

[*The girl comes forward into the light She is about twenty-three or four years old, strong and well made Under*



*a wide hat her brown hair clusters around her pale, tired face and soft eyes About her is a queer combination of innocence and wisdom Her drooping weariness only partly conceals a sort of richness in her, a richness of living, around her lips and in her eyes and full-breasted figure Her movements and speech betray a kind of matronliness engrafted on her, giving along with her girlishness an air of decisiveness and strength, as of one who had known the hard responsibility of bread and meat for others She sets her suitcase heavily down]*

*Girl* You all don't know me, do you?

*[GILCHRIST rises to his feet in embarrassment and rolls down his trousers NEILL comes in with a small trunk under his arms]*

*Gilchrist* I can't say we do

*Mrs Gilchrist* It's not Rhody, is it?

*Girl* *[laughing]* That's who it is, Aunt Etta. *[She hurries over to MRS GILCHRIST and kisses her]* How are you all? *[Turning to GILCHRIST]* You didn't know me, did you, Uncle Hardy?—I haven't seen you in so long

*Gilchrist* *[fumbling with his shoes as he puts them on]* You don't mean you're the little girl who was down here visiting once?

*Rhoda* *[shaking hands with him]* I've grown up, you see Anybody will grow up in ten years

*Mrs Gilchrist* I'm glad to see you, Rhoda

*[GILCHRIST hurries into the dining-room and fetches a chair]*

*Gilchrist* Sit down I bet you're tired out

*[NEILL sets the trunk on the porch, takes off his hat, and remains respectfully standing]*

*Rhoda* No, I'll sit right here on the edge of the porch the way I did a long, long time ago when you would sit over there making hawk-callers for me

*Gilchrist* Did I? I be dog!

*[RHODA pulls out her hat-pin and takes off her hat]*

*Mrs Gilchrist* You have changed, Rhoda I wouldn't 'a' known you anywhere

*Gilchrist* How'd you get here?

*Rhoda* I came over from the station with Mr Matthews He brought my trunk by—if you can call it a trunk—and everything We met Neill—your name is Neill, isn't it?—as we came by the barn

*Neill* Yes, ma'am, that's my name Yeh, I met 'em out there in the lane Where you want me to put the trunk, Mis' Etta?

*Mrs Gilchrist* Put it in the upper room

*[NEILL takes the trunk and goes along the porch and into the house at the right MRS GILCHRIST gets to her feet and follows him]*

You just sit still, Rhoda, and I'll go in and see that the room is all straight We've had it fixed for you several days

*Rhoda* I can hardly realize, Uncle Hardy, I'm going to live here with you and Aunt Etta the rest of my life

*Gilchrist* *[mumbling]* Won't take you long to get tired of this place

*Rhoda* No, I'll never get tired For ten years I've wanted to come back And now I'm here—*[She stands listening]* what's that?

*Gilchrist* What?

*Rhoda* That singing in the trees?

*Gilchrist* That's June bugs, we call 'em The right name is katydids

*Rhoda* Yes, that's right They used to sing like that And look up in the sky at the stars shining—just the same way I never saw 'em much in town

*Gilchrist* *[mumbling again]* Yeh, yeh, they shine bright out here

*Rhoda* There was always a crowd going and coming up there, such a stir nobody could rest And out here everything is so quiet you can hear yourself think *[She gets up and goes over to the left and stands straining her eyes in the darkness]* Is that cotton growing out there?

*Gilchrist* Yes

*Rhoda* *[with a short laugh]* The best in the neighborhood still, I bet

*Gilchrist* Well, I don't know any better

*Rhoda* I knew it would be Tomorrow I'll get me a hoe and chop along with the others

*[NEILL comes down on the porch]*

*Gilchrist* You'd blister your hands the first thing

*Rhoda* *[without looking around]* I wouldn't mind that *[She looks out at the sky with shining eyes]* Is that the evening star that's going down?

*Gilchrist* Yes I reckon you'll want some supper

*Rhoda* I've already had some I'm sorry I'm so late

*Gilchrist* Maybe you'll want to wash your face and straighten up

*Mrs Gilchrist* [calling from within the house] You can come in here, Rhoda

*Rhoda* Yes, Aunt Etta [Pointing to a tree in the yard] What kind of tree is that?

*Gilchrist* That's a common china tree

*Neill* They're common everywhere

*Rhoda* Sure It was nothing but a sprout [Examining it] There's where I broke a

little limb from it once [She goes up the porch, then turns back] And won't I just

eat you out of house and home, though! Eggs and potatoes and sausage and ham

and collards and cracklings and all the garden "sass" you could haul in a cart,

and buttermilk by the gallon! [With a sudden look at him] I'm so glad to be here!

[She goes up into the house at the right *NEILL* leans against a post, looking up the porch and slapping his leg idly with his hat]

*Neill* Well, sir—I declare!

*Gilchrist* [presently] What'd you say, *Neill*?

*Neill* Nothing, nothing

[*GILCHRIST* picks up his cheroot from the floor and lights it He rises and walks in the yard]

Oh, I was just gonna say I bet her trunk's full o' silk dresses

*Gilchrist* Aprons, *Neill*, and I bet

*Neill* Hunh? Hah-hah-hah! [He breaks into a foolish, embarrassed laugh]

*Gilchrist* That lightning's quit in the north

*Neill* Yeh

*Gilchrist* [walking back and forth] Quit!

*Neill* No rain after all, mebbe

*Gilchrist* Dry weather, and it'll rain when it will rain No, I don't believe in signs, *Neill*

*Neill* Well, I believe I'll mosey on down the road

*Gilchrist* Water the mules, *Neill*?

*Neill* [chagrined] I be blamed, I forgot it!

*Gilchrist* I thought so

*Neill* Sir?

*Gilchrist* Nothing

*Neill* Then, ag'in, I didn't have time Good night [He goes off and immediately comes back] Reckon she can play the organ,

*Mr Hardy*

*Gilchrist* Don't know

[*NEILL* starts off again and then stops]

*Neill* Mr Hardy

*Gilchrist* Hanh?

*Neill* She ain't painted

*Gilchrist* That's right, she's not

[*NEILL* goes off chuckling *GILCHRIST* sits again on the porch, leaning his head between his hands and smoking]

## ACT TWO

### SCENE ONE

The back yard and rear part of the *Gilchrist* farmhouse, several months later It is a cold December day near noon, and a big fire is roaring around the pots in the middle of the yard A pile of fire wood is near by Off to the left stretch the fields of brown cotton stalks, dull and dead in the sickly light of the winter sun The empty burrs rattle in the freezing wind, and the smoke rising out of the kitchen chimney is swept away in its breath The china tree to the left front is bare *HARDY GILCHRIST* is killing hogs today, and off to the left of the outhouse the sound of voices, shouts, singing, and grunting is heard *Mag's* voice is raised in a song

"Ta-ra-ra-ra-boom-da-ree—

I got bumps all over me"

*SION ALFORD*, old man Jacob's boy of sixteen, thin and snaggle-toothed, is squatted near the fire, broiling hog mits on the coals He makes some pretensions to being dressed up, with a dirty collar and tie And now and then he carefully takes off his cap, pulls out a small pocket mirror and arranges his hair, which is shining with grease and is parted in the middle, with two little rolls of twisted curls on either side A battered auto-harp is lying on the bench close by him Presently he takes up a milt, squints, blows on it, and carefully lays it back to cook Then after diligently cleaning his fingers with his dirty handkerchief, he sits on the bench and begins twanging his harp

*Sion* [watching the kitchen door and singing in a high contralto voice]

"I wisht I was a snowbird

With nothing else to do,

I'd set in the top of the apple-tree

And make sweet music for you—

Good-by, my lover, oh, tell me good-by"



[Old LONIE comes in at the left with a bucket She wears heavy brogan shoes, an old slat bonnet, and a man's ragged coat She dips the bucket into one of the pots and returns the way she came]

Mag [calling] Hurry up, Lonie, and help ketch me these hyuh chit'lins!

Gilchrist [shouting outside] Now everybody pull together! Pull there Neill, don't let the hair set on that hog! That's it, scrape him, boys! Get it off him while he's hot.

Old Jacob [grunting and laboring] Don't be afraid of him, folkses He's dead and can't bite you Shuck him I tell you, shuck that hog!

Gilchrist [presently shouting again] Spit on your hands and turn him! [In a moment, with his sleeves rolled up, he rushes in, carrying a bucket He dips it in the pot] Look out, everybody, here I come! This boiling stuff'll bring that hair [He rushes out Presently he shouts again] Mag, bring us a pan of hot water to work on this head!

[SION takes out a bottle of perfume and anoints himself and goes on singing]

Sion

"If all the trees was silver  
And the blooms was diamonts too,  
I'd take me my ax and cut 'em all down  
And bring the sweet blossoms to you—

Good-by, my lover, oh, tell me good-by"

Mag [snuffing the air as she comes in] The Lord help my life, such a scent!

Sion Hanh?

Mag You stink worse'n a goat

Sion [sullenly] It smells sweet She uses it

Mag She don't wallow in it Reckon she puts lard on her hair, too, don't she?

Sion Hern's purty and'll lay without it

Mag He's plumb crazy with love—setting hyuh all roached up, greased and perfumed and singing like the cherrybims in heaven You'd better be out there helping your pore old daddy scrape them hogs

Sion I ain't able to work

Mag I'd like to git me a stick and blister your hide, you'd work

Sion Mammy and pappy says I'm weakly, I tell you [He seizes a milt and begins eating it]

Mag Your belly ain't weakly I can tell you that [Going out with her steaming pan] If you was my young un, I'd break me

a hick'ry and beat some o' that love and mess outn you

[SION stares after her, puckering his forehead thoughtfully With a giggle he begins gobbling down his milt Around the house at the left rear comes a little old bent woman, thinly clad, wrinkled and worn, but with a childlike, innocent face and wide, sad eyes She sits down on the bench before the pots, warming herself and saying nothing]

Gilchrist [off at the left] Heigh, Aunt Margaret!

Aunt Margaret Morning, Hardy

[GILCHRIST comes in and shakes her hand]

Gilchrist We wondered where you were Aunt Margaret I ain't come to help you with yer hawgs this time

Gilchrist That's all right How's Trege?

Aunt Margaret Seems no better

Gilchrist Doctor been?

Aunt Margaret [raising her plaintive eyes to him] No

Gilchrist You'd better—won't cost you a cent—I keep telling you

Aunt Margaret Yes, you trust doctors and I trust the Lord

Gilchrist [shaking his head] Yes, I know that

Aunt Margaret I come by to git Etta to go to the church and pray with me for him

Gilchrist She's not well enough to be out in the cold

Aunt Margaret [sighing] Ah me!

Gilchrist And look at you—half frozen Rhoda's got something for you [Calling] Rhoda!

[The kitchen door opens and RHODA comes out on the porch]

Can you get that cloak for Aunt Margaret?

Rhoda Yes—in a minute

[She returns into the house and reappears with a good stout cloak which she helps AUNT MARGARET on with RHODA is neatly dressed and wears a bright red sweater Her eyes are clear and sparkling and her cheeks pink from the cold The marks of matronly decisiveness which characterized much of her former manner seem to have

<sup>1</sup> Familiar for "Treasure" and pronounced accordingly

*disappeared into a glowing, full-spirited femineness]*

Aunt Margaret [mumbling] It's too fine—fine Thanky, thanky

[She keeps her eyes on GILCHRIST, never looking at RHODA, but SION stares after RHODA with open mouth until the kitchen door has closed behind her again]

Gilchrist Fits like a top Now you feel warm [Patting her shoulders] Wait till after dinner, and I'll cut you up some fine fresh meat to take home

Aunt Margaret I got to go on to the church now I'll come by this evening for it

Gilchrist [putting his arm around her affectionately] All right Don't worry Treg'e'll be better

Aunt Margaret It's not him I worry about—he's a Christian It's you

Gilchrist [hastily] Yes, I know, I know

Aunt Margaret And I'm worried now more'n ever I was [She stares at him piteously] I am, son

[She turns and goes quickly away around the house the way she came GILCHRIST stares at the boiling pots a moment, then sweeps back his hair from under his hat with his hand and hurries off to his work at the left RHODA comes out of the kitchen with a pail and goes to the well SION, who has been sitting, cleaning his nails, jumps up]

Sion Lemme git your water for you, Miss Rhody

Rhoda Help yourself

[He starts to draw the water, when NEILL comes in]

Neill Sion, you're too weak

Sion [mumbling as he releases the chain to NEILL] I ain't, nuther [He backs away and stands eyeing them]

Rhoda Thank you, Neill

Neill [taking the water to the kitchen for her] All right [Stopping] Have you decided to go, Rhody?

Rhoda [looking off] I've been too busy to think much of it, Neill

Neill [with a hint of impatience] No, you ain't [As she keeps looking out at the workers] That's all right out there They're doing well enough

Rhoda [shortly] I know it

[She takes the bucket from NEILL and goes into the kitchen He stands still

a moment and then hurries out SION comes up and stares at the door that has closed behind RHODA OLD JACOB a little gnarled man of sixty-five with a gray ragged mustache, comes in and drags up the wash-bench before the fire His old coat is pinned across his breast with wooden pegs He sits down, blows upon his fingers, and stretches his heavy shoes to the fire, laying a whetstone and butcher knife beside him]

Jacob [in a piping voice] Sion, your milt hyuh is a-burning up

[With a bound SION is back to the pot He grabs his broil from the coals and begins eating it]

Gimme a leetle piece of it, Sion

Sion Nunh-unh They's plenty of 'em out there in the tub, Pa

Jacob [musing] Sech a hog-killing, sech a hog-killing He's got enough meat to stock the county Anh, that's the way it is, Sion—they that has gits more, and them that ain't got nothing it's tuk away

Sion [irritably] That's it, mebbe

Jacob [looking at him fondly] Course you don't understand it, pore fellow You know you'll be keered fer The Lord provides fer babes and sech

Sion [licking his fingers] Hee-hee!

[MAG comes in and bends over the fire, warming her hands]

Mag It's a cold day, and his meat'll shore keep [Shivering] That wind jest cuts through you

Jacob [punching the fire] It do [Cocking his eye towards the northeast] Bad weather a-coming Wild geese was flying south last night [Holding up his hand] The feel in the air 'minds me of the winter of 'ninety-four Laord, Laord, that was a cold un The Cape Fair froze over so you could drive acrost it with a mule and wagon Mis' Kivette did, and her baby with her

[SION goes out and gets another milt and begins broiling it OLD JACOB looks at him and chuckles]

Jest look at that there boy He ain't never had a bait of them things in his life And don't he smell good?

Mag If I was Mr Hardy, I wouldn't let him eat up my fresh meat that-a-way, a-d he not earning his salt

Sion He don't keer

Jacob That he don't, Mag Hardy's sorry for the pore boy and him afflicted Sion's pleasures is few in this vale below

Mag Hunh!

Jacob [*changing the subject in his secretive and meaningful way*] Don't seem lak a r'al hawg-killing and Aunt Marg'ret not hyuh

Mag She's a-nussing that dying boy o' hern

Jacob I reckon

Gilchrist [*off at the left*] Step back, Neill, and let me hang him!

Jacob Jest look a-here at Hardy lifting that hawg up by hisself It'll weigh three hundred if a pound

Gilchrist Hanh! There you are All right, Neill, bring me fresh water and the tub, and I'll gut him in a pair o' minutes!

[NEILL comes in and gets a bucket of water from the pot]

Neill Jacob, you better fill up this here pot

[*He goes out as OLD JACOB creaks to his feet and begins drawing water at the well*]

Mag Sion, git some wood and put on the fire

Sion This hyuh melt is jest a-cooking fine

Mag [*cutting the wood herself and replenishing the fire*] You make me mad enough to kill

[LONIE comes in and sits on the bench

OLD JACOB empties his bucket into the pot and sits down by her He begins whetting his knife MRS GILCHRIST, wrapped in a heavy cloak, walks unsteadily down the porch from the right and stands leaning against a post looking out]

Mrs Gilchrist How you all getting on, Jacob?

Jacob Got 'em all killed and hanging up now, Mis' Etta, and a mighty fine chanct of meat you got out there too

Mrs Gilchrist How much you reckon it'll make, Jacob?

Jacob Three thousand pounds, no less I'd stake them two haslets Hardy give me on it

Mrs Gilchrist Two?

Jacob [*with a touch of gleeful malice*] Two and a backbone Me'n my raft o' young uns 'll feed Sunday

Mrs Gilchrist Yes [*Her eyes roam wear-*

*ily over the fields and sky She turns and goes slowly up the porch into the house again Presently there is a weak labored sound of an organ inside and a thin shrill voice singing "There is a fountain filled with blood"*]

Jacob Pore thing—ah, clost and stingy right up to the grave

Mag Hunh!—Getting 'most too weak to play her organ now.

[LONIE gives a little nodding jerk with her head]

Jacob 'Twon't be long and she'll be to that bo'rne from whence no traveler returns, as the Scripture says

Lonie [*with a gasp*] Sump'n's killing her Jacob Aye, it is She's wasting fast [*Sighing*] We've all got to come to it

Mag She's a good woman, too—kinder'n most people know

Jacob She is that She don't talk much, but she's good I ain't never hearn her say a harm word 'bout nobody Anh, she's good—[*Apparently with afterthought*] and a lonesome woman, too

Mag Yeh, poor thing

Jacob [*laughing, and jerking his thumb towards the kitchen*] That un she's got in the house with her ain't lonesome She talks, she's lively

Mag [*with casual scorn*] You don't say so!

Jacob [*with an admiring chuckle*] Ain't that young critter a wheel-hoss, though Laord! Laord! She's same as Neill and Hardy for work

Mag I didn't think it when she come here from Durham But she were made for the farm if anybody were

Jacob [*his eyes narrowing introspectively as he appears to forget the subject*] Where does the Scripture say the spirits of hogs go when they die, Mag?

Mag [*popping her lips*] They don't go nowhere They're just dead, that's all

Jacob In the ground, that's where It says the animal spirits return in the earth and the heavenly spirits go upward Hah-hah!

Mag Hogs ain't got no souls

Jacob The Scriptures say different from you and—Hardy

[*They are silent Presently RHODA comes to the kitchen door JACOB watches her meaningly as he whistles to himself*]

Rhoda Sion, bring me some more water, please!

[Sion springs up and hurries to do her bidding]

Jacob Jest look at that boy He'll work for her, plumb crazy about her

Mag Didn't have to go far

Jacob [nodding as he spits] They's others crazy about her if I'm any judge [Looking at her slyly] Heh-heh-heh, ain't they, though? [Jerking his knife behind him and lowering his voice] How's Neill gitting on with her?

Mag I don't know

Jacob [quickly] Sho', sho'—and her?

Mag [sharply] Better ask her yourself

[JACOB chuckles wisely again]

Jacob [looking back over the top of the house at the sun] Well, I reckon it's 'bout dinner-time fer us

Mag Yeh Me'n' Lomie's going to leave the rest of the chit'lins to rid till after dinner

Jacob Heigh, Miss Rhody, ain't it time to stop and feed!

Sion [coming out of the kitchen] She told me to [He rings the bell and returns to his broil]

Gilchrist [outside] Yeh, we're just coming

[Presently GILCHRIST and NEILL enter at the left They come to the fire and warm themselves Their hands are greasy and are stained with blood GILCHRIST turns and stands surveying the scene of his handiwork]

How's that for pork, Jacob?

Jacob A sight fer sore eyes, sartain

Gilchrist Every one of them hogs hanging up there is less'n two years old Purty good for piney-woods rooters, anh?

Jacob You got the neighborhood beat in everything, Hardy You're the luckiest man!

Gilchrist Ain't luck, Jacob, it's hard work and a little use of my head Sion, run there to the hog barrel and bring me two pans

Sion My melt 'll burn, Mr

Gilchrist [reaching down with a laugh and lifting Sion up by the collar] Get the pans, Sion

[Sion with a terrified scamper dashes out and brings the pans]

That's a good boy You all wash and get ready for dinner [He goes to the water-shelf and takes a cake of home-made soap

from the soap-gourd He calls] Is dinner ready, Rhody?

Rhoda [opening the kitchen door and looking out] In a few minutes

Gilchrist Well, bring a little of your blackberry wine out here and warm up Jacob and the rest of 'em a bit, if you don't mind

[MRS GILCHRIST suddenly begins playing the organ again and singing GILCHRIST stands listening a moment and then turns abruptly back to the group in the yard He dips water from a pot and begins washing his hands in a basin]

You all excuse me first I want to step down to the barn and get a bag of salt

[He pulls out a checkered handkerchief and wipes his hands RHODA comes out with a pitcher of wine and a glass As GILCHRIST goes off around the house, he calls back over his shoulder]

Help yourself, folks It'll make you feel young

Jacob Yes, and—[Looking at NEILL] somebody needs it They're down in the dumps today

[NEILL stirs the fire around the pots] And a-stirring the ashes—bad luck in love

Rhoda [pouring out the wine] Here, Lonie, drink a little You must be frozen

[LONIE takes the wine in her trembling, clawlike hands and drinks OLD JACOB eyes her closely]

Jacob You'll git high if you don't mind out, Lonie Heh-heh!

Rhoda And here's some for you, Mag

Mag Thanky, ma'am [She drinks and hands the glass back]

Rhoda How much, Jacob?

Jacob Heh, heh-heh! I leave that to you

[She pours him out a large glass With a preparatory smacking of his lips and a clearing of his throat, he takes the glass and empties it into his mouth He screws up his cheeks till they close his eyes, washing the wine around over his toothless gums]

Mag You're a-gitting all there is outn it, Jacob

Jacob I am that, heh-heh! I am that, Mag

Rhoda [pouring out another glass] Here, Neill

Neill *[without looking up]* I don't want none

Rhoda Come on and drink some

Neill I don't want any, thank you

Rhoda Oh, Neill, drink it

Neill *[sharply]* I don't want it

Jacob What ails you, Neill? Got the mulligrubs?

Rhoda Here, drink it, Sion

Jacob Hyuh, that boy'll be down drunk if he swallows all that *[He reaches out and drinks the glass nearly to the bottom and hands it to Sion]* Mebbe that won't hurt him Don't know, though, the smell of a rotten apple makes him drunk

*[Sion drinks his swallow and hands the glass back to Rhoda]*

Sion *[shyly]* That was shore good, Miss Rhoda

Rhoda Glad it was, Sion Anybody have any more?

Jacob No, no, a little snitch later on in the evening when the cold gits blue

Mag No'm, I got enough now

*[LONIE shakes her head, too, and RHODA returns into the kitchen]*

Jacob Wonder Mis' Etta would let 'em have wine around *[Hastily]* Not that there's any harm in it, of course

Neill Maybe she can't help herself

Jacob They's gospel fer drinking it, though God the Saviour hisself made wine at a wedding onct *[Suddenly he pops his hands together and rubs his thighs]* That stuff shore goes to the right spot Now a good dinner of collards and backbone and sweet 'taters, and I'll be ready to ride How 'bout you, Neill?

Neill What?

Jacob *[cackling]* By gums! he didn't even hear me Anh, he's studying, wropped up in sump'n' What is it, Neill?

Neill Can't a man keep his mouth shet if he wants to?

Jacob Heh-heh-heh! I reckon he kin More mouths than one's been shet up—some of 'em forever—by a bright piece of calico

Neill *[turning his burning eyes upon him]* What'd you say?

Jacob *[starting back]* Oh, nothing, Neill, nothing *[Suddenly reaching down and grabbing a pan]* Le's wash, everybody

*[He dips water out of a pot and begins washing his hands MAG and LONIE do likewise, NEILL stands star-*

*ing at the fire Old JACOB throws the water from his pan and gets the towel from the porch He wipes his hands and passes the towel on to MAG SION, now that RHODA is in the house, sits contentedly on his haunches, gnawing his meat]*

Rhoda *[opening the dining-room door]* Mag, you and Lonie come help me set the table You'll be a lot warmer in here out of that wind

*[They hang the towel on a limb of the tree and go in, closing the door behind them Old JACOB sits down on the bench, whetting his butcher knife]*

Jacob Neill, I didn't mean to make you mad You know I will talk, my tongue jest will

Neill *[turning himself about]* Oh, that's all right

Jacob Where do you hurt, Neill?

Neill Jest feel off my feed, I reckon

Jacob *[slyly]* Pneumony? I'll declare!

Neill I dunno, I tell you

Jacob *[mournfully]* Anh, pore fellow *[Again he pops his hands together and slaps his thighs]* Laord! that stuff warmed me up *[He gets up from the bench, brandishes his knife in the air, and cuts a step or two]* Here I am eighteen ag'in, ready to go to old man Ransom's dance *[He turns and pokes his face up by NEILL's shoulder]* Ain't she a purty thing, Neill?

Neill Who's purty?

Jacob *[cackling, and gesturing towards the house]* Her in there She's like one o' them big red apples you buy at the store

Neill *[spitting with a distasteful grimace]* Listen to him Laord-a-mercy!

Jacob Hah-hah! They don't make 'em no purtier, Neill And I ain't never seed a smarter one Wisht I could call back about thirty year I'd go for her

Neill *[breaking into a bitter laugh]* You!

Jacob Yeh, me Oh, yes, I had a way with 'em, Neill, I had a way *[Stepping before him and looking significantly up in his face]* Course to the world, my boy, you don't know your business Laord, with your strength you don't have to wait Why, if I was you I'd jest up and say, "Rhody, we'll git married tomorrow," providing that was the date you'd sot, and tomorrow we'd be married

Neill Hunh! you don't know Rhody

[Quickly] I ain't planning to git married  
Now hush

Jacob Heh-heh-heh! I know you, Neill  
[Smacking his lips, his eyes shining] Anh, blackberries and strawberries, Neill, they ain't nothing to her Boy, she's ripe and ready to pick I hate to see her going to waste, and you'd better re'ch and pick her off or somebody else will

Neill [angrily] I don't want to hear no more of it

Jacob [throwing out his arms] I'm giving you good advice all right [Stretching his hands out towards the fire] Don't she keer nothing fer you a-tall, Neill?

Neill [led on in hungry uncertainty] She likes me all right, but nothing more'n that, I reckon

Jacob Mebbe they's somebody else

Neill Ain't nobody else to be

Jacob Heh-heh-heh! Yeh, you're mebbe blind You see the sporrer 'way, 'way yander, and miss the turkey clost by

Neill [grasping his arm] Have you seen her with anybody else? [Casting JACOB from him] Naw, they ain't nobody in the neighborhood she'd think of going with, though plenty of 'em wants to

Jacob [winking and rubbing his hands in delight] I'm too deep for you, ain't I? They do accuse me o' that at times [Casually] Well, jest to be talking, say a man marries a woman like Mis' Etta in there—no harm meant to her, pore critter Say he's a big strong fellow like Hardy Well, such a fellow sleeping in a cold bed every night fer fifteen year is gonna have some thoughts, ain't he?

Neill [looking at him puzzled] Yeh, you're too deep fer me

Jacob You ain't never been married Yeh, them two'd make a fine match to see, wouldn't they?—And the pore woman in there can't live much longer

Neill Great God! Are you crazy?

[GILCHRIST comes in at the left with a bag of salt on his shoulder He throws it in the outhouse on the left Unseen by them, MRS GILCHRIST comes out on the porch and stands leaning against a post at the extreme right]

Jacob [watching GILCHRIST and chuckling] Aye, boy, she's a rich un, ripe and ready And I've seed looks going about—seed things

[MRS GILCHRIST draws herself up rigid,

listening NEILL's long arm shoots out and knocks old JACOB behind him]

Neill [in a strained voice] You old—you old dirty b'ar hog!

Gilchrist What's the matter, Neill?

Jacob Nothin', nothin' We're playin', fer I'm feelin' young ag'in [Drawing back in alarm] Why, Mis' Etta, you'll ketch cold out here

Mrs Gilchrist [faintly] I just wanted a breath of fresh air

Rhoda [opening the dining-room door] Come on to dinner, you all!

[MAG and LONIE are seen taking their seats at the table inside]

Gilchrist [going toward the house] Come on, Jacob Come on, Neill Sion, get up and see if you can eat a little more

Jacob Coming with my mouth open

[Sion looks in the mirror and follows him, polishing his finger nails as he goes]

Gilchrist [stopping at the porch] What's the matter, Etta?

Mrs Gilchrist Nothing, nothing [Shivering] I'm cold

Rhoda You want me to bring your dinner up to the fire, Aunt Etta?

Mrs Gilchrist [creeping weakly up the porch] Yes, bring it up there

[She goes off to the sitting-room GILCHRIST looks sharply after her a moment and then goes into the dining-room and seats himself at the table Old JACOB and SION troop in after him]

Gilchrist [looking out through the door] Come on in to dinner, Neill

Neill Go ahead and eat, I'll be in in a minute

Rhoda [coming out with a bucket] You all go ahead I've got to put some water on to heat

[Seeing NEILL, she stops a moment and then comes on to the well and begins filling her bucket GILCHRIST, inside, reaches behind him, glances out, hesitates, and then closes the dining-room door]

Neill [suddenly clenching his hands] Great God Almighty! Blind, blind, I been blind as a bat!

Rhoda You better go on in and eat your dinner, Neill

Neill Come here a minute, Rhody

Rhoda What is it?

Neill *[moving quickly over to her and snatching her hand]* Are you going with me to that party tonight? I ask you again

Rhoda Let my hand loose *[She looks him firmly in the face]*

Neill *[letting go her hand]* All right

Rhoda *[after a moment]* Yes, I'll go, Neill But I'll go of my own free will

Neill Do you want to go with me?

Rhoda If I didn't, I'd say so *[Half-angrily]* You'd better quit talking to me like that or I won't go with you anywhere

*[In the house MRS GILCHRIST begins playing the organ again and singing "How Firm a Foundation"]*

Neill Oh, Rhody, can't you see—can't you? Can't you like me a bit? Don't you see I can't think of nothing but you!

Rhoda I like you all right Now let me go on back *[Suddenly appealing]* Somebody might see you

Neill I don't care who sees us *[Furiously, as he puts his arm around her, holding her to him and pointing to the house]* It's him in there, ain't it? Swear to God you don't love him in there—Hardy Gilchrist!

Rhoda Neill!—now—now—let me go, I tell you!

Neill I won't let you loose I'm gonna find out something *[Wild with anger]* Tell me, is it him?

Rhoda I won't tell you I won't

*[NEILL snatches her to him and kisses her as she fights against him]*

Neill By God! it is him! it is him! I knew it

*[The dining-room door suddenly opens, and GILCHRIST stands on the porch]*

Gilchrist *[yelling]* Neill!

*[There is a scramble inside as old JACOB rushes to the door to look out NEILL releases RHODA, and she drops down on the wash-bench, leaning forward, her head bent over GILCHRIST turns back towards the dining-room]*

You all go right on eating your dinner and don't none of you open this door *[He closes the door and steps out into the yard]* Neill, what do you mean?

Neill *[sullenly]* Nothing I ain't hurt her But I see now what I didn't see

Gilchrist *[grasping him by the shoulder]* Tell me what you mean

Neill *[springing back and seizing old JACOB's butcher knife from the bench]* Get

out of my way The first man lays hands on me I'll kill him

Gilchrist What'n the name of God ails you, Neill? Have you gone crazy?

Rhoda *[running to GILCHRIST]* Go back, Hardy, go back in the house

*[GILCHRIST pushes her gently behind him]*

Neill *[whining with rage]* I see it all now Yeh It's you been standing in between us *[Stepping forward with the knife in his hand]* Get outn my way now.

*[GILCHRIST hesitates a moment and then suddenly knocks the knife out of NEILL's hand NEILL doubles up, nursing his hand against his stomach GILCHRIST picks up the knife and throws it far out into the field]*

Gilchrist Now, Neill, go on and eat your dinner and behave yourself

*[Old JACOB's inquisitive face is seen peering through the half-opened door]*

*MRS GILCHRIST is heard singing within GILCHRIST sees JACOB's face]*

Shut that door, Jacob, and eat your dinner!

*[JACOB bangs the door]*

Neill *[half sobbing]* Oh, I couldn't see it and it all going on under my nose Look at you there with your arm around her!

Gilchrist *[dropping his arm, his mouth twitching and his fists clenched]* Neill, you an' me've been together too many days on this old farm to fight like cats and dogs

Neill *[springing at him]* We'll see, you sneaking—

*[GILCHRIST grapples with him RHODA stands looking on, motionless and silent The dining-room door is opened cautiously, and old JACOB comes out, followed by SION, LONIE, and MAG They are gnawing potatoes and meaty bones, which they carry in their hands SION looks on a moment and then clings to his father in fear]*

Rhoda *[crying out]* Stop it! Please stop it! Hardy, let me talk to him

Gilchrist *[trying to hold NEILL's hands]* Behave yourself now, Neill

Jacob Loard-a-mercy, what's up?

*[MRS GILCHRIST comes down the porch]*

Mrs Gilchrist *[dropping weakly to the edge of the porch and calling in a low voice]* Hardy, Hardy!

*[GILCHRIST casts his eyes over NEILL's shoulder at her]*



Neill *[gasping]* I'll kill you I know about you two dirty dogs!

Gilchrist Now, Neill!

Neill Yeh, and I'll knock your teeth down your damn throat!

*[GILCHRIST with a wrench frees his hand and strikes NEILL full in the face. He falls flat in the yard, the blood running from his mouth.]*

Mrs Gilchrist Let me get away from it all! Let me get away! *[She totters up the porch again.]*

Gilchrist *[bending over NEILL]* Bring me some water, Rhoda, and a towel

*[RHODA snatches the towel hanging in the tree and brings the bucket from the pump. GILCHRIST bathes NEILL's face. MRS GILCHRIST is heard praying in the house.]*

Mag Lord! he ain't dead, is he?

Gilchrist *[sharply]* No!

Jacob *[slobbering with excitement]* A mule couldn't 'a' kicked him no harder Lord! that was a blow! What in the world ails you two?

Gilchrist *[looking up]* Go on back to your dinner *[Shouting]* Every one of you!

*[He waves them off before him. With backward glances they all finally return to their meal and close the door.]*

Neill *[suddenly sitting up and speaking in a low voice]* Let me alone now, I'm all right *[He sits quietly a moment and then springs to his feet, raising his hands above his head]* May I bust hell wide open if I don't git even *[Whirling upon them]* You damn dirty hogs, that's what you are!

*[RHODA shrinks back from him, and NEILL rushes off around the house, sobbing and cursing, leaving GILCHRIST bent on his knees. GILCHRIST leans forward, balancing himself with his hand on the ground. RHODA comes up to him and stretches out her hand, touching him on the shoulder.]*

Gilchrist *[standing up and looking at her with a queer smile]* Such things happen, they just seem to happen all of a sudden sometimes

Rhoda *[twisting her hands in her apron]* What's to come? *[Starting]* And poor Aunt Etta saw it all *[Suddenly clutching his arm]* I'm afraid he'll hurt you!

Gilchrist *[taking her hands from his arm]* Well, let him I'll never lift my hands

against him again *[With a sharp sigh]* Anh, I've loved him like my own boy!

Rhoda It's all because of me Oh, I know it too well

*[GILCHRIST suddenly looks at her intently and then turns away.]*

Gilchrist Come on, let's go in now I've got to get back to my work

Rhoda *[shuddering]* What he said!

Gilchrist Ah, don't remember it *[Helplessly]* I wish—I wish *[He shakes his shoulders and opens the door for her]*

Rhoda *[looking up at him as she passes]* What—Hardy? *[They go in]*

## ACT TWO

### SCENE TWO

*The Gilchrist sitting-room and parlor, the night of the same day. At the center back is a fireplace with a log fire going, and to the right of this is a door which opens into the Gilchrists' bedroom. At the right of this is a neatly curtained window and farther up at the right front an organ at which Mrs GILCHRIST sits, playing feebly. A lighted lamp is on the table in the center of the room. In the left center a door opens into Rhoda's room, and farther back at the left rear is a door which opens to the back porch. By the door is a wooden box piled high with firewood. The room is carpeted with straw matting, and here and there cheap, prim chairs are placed about the room. On the walls hang several crayon portraits, distorted likenesses of relatives dead and gone. A rocking-chair with a quilt draped over it is before the fire. The wind whistles and whines around the eaves of the house and drums like a brood of swallows in the chimney.*

Mrs Gilchrist *[singing and playing slowly]*

"What a friend we have in Jesus,  
All our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer!"

*[Her voice dies away, and she leans her face over the keys, sobbing softly in her shawl. Steps are heard coming up the porch, and she rises hurriedly and sits in the rocking-chair. MAG comes in through the door at the left rear.]*  
Mag Mr Hardy told me to come in here



and warm, Mis' Etta The fire's gone out in the kitchen [*Putting a package by the door*] And here's Aunt Margaret's meat when she comes for it

Mrs Gilchrist [*As MAG stands to the fire warming herself*] Where's Mr Gilchrist?

Mag He and Lonie's jest finishing up trimming the hams now and salting the meat down He'll be hyuh in a minute [*Punching the fire*] Lonie don't feel the cold the way I do My toes is like tags of ice

Mrs Gilchrist It's cold—cold [*Looking at MAG*] We're all poor erring creatures, Mag We are nothing in our own strength, even Hardy ain't, though, poor man, he thinks he is

Mag [*embarrassed*] Yeh, yes, ma'am, I know Lord!—[*Hastily*] Well, I ain't never seed such a come-off in my born days Mr Hardy looks like his best friend had died

Mrs Gilchrist Where's Neill?

Mag Jacob come by about dark and said he'd gone and hired to old man Turner

Mrs Gilchrist [*bowing her head suddenly in her hands*] He's young and headstrong, but maybe he'll come back

Mag Hunh, I know Neill Sykes He'll never fergit nor forgive, and he can't fergit that lick he got in the face [*Angrily*] Somebody's run him outn his senses He wouldn't 'a' done what he done today fer a million dollars, but now that he's done it, he'll harbor it up till it eats his insides out like box lye The Sykses are like that

Mrs Gilchrist [*in a gentle voice*] Mebbe they'll make up tonight at the party She's gone over there.

Mag Her?

Mrs Gilchrist Hardy told her to go

Mag [*shaking her head*] I don't understand it all, not me

Mrs Gilchrist [*wildly, as she suddenly seizes MAG by the hand*] Yes, you do understand it, Mag You know what's up

Mag [*trying to pull away*] Lord! Whatever you mean, Mis' Etta?

Mrs Gilchrist Is she loving somebody else in the place of Neill? Haven't you seen looks going between 'em?

Mag [*getting free and staring at the ceiling*] I don't know nothing about all that you're saying, Mis' Etta [*Backing towards the door at the left rear*] Miss Rhody'll come to her senses and take Neill, adder all, she will Don't you worry Neill's the

very one cut out fer her He'll be her husband yit [*Hurriedly*] I got to go back now and help 'em finish

[*As she catches hold of the door, it opens, and LONIE comes creeping in and draws up a chair by the fire MAG, somewhat reassured, moves up again*]

You git done, Lonie?

[*LONIE nods her head, bends down and warms her feet and hands MRS GILCHRIST looks into the fire and says nothing Presently GILCHRIST comes up the porch and enters MAG turns herself about by the fire*]

Gilchrist Well, Mag, you and Lonie've done fine today I appreciate it

Mag That's all right We're glad to do it, Mr Hardy

Gilchrist I didn't mean to keep you so late [*Pulling out his watch and winding it*] Going on ten o'clock Well, you all sleep late tomorrow Needn't come till dinner-time if you don't want to

Mag All right, sir

[*She and LONIE sit in silence, embarrassed*]

I reckon we better be doing, Lonie

[*GILCHRIST takes out his pocketbook and pulls a bill from it*]

Gilchrist Here, Mag

Mag [*taking it*] That's too much, Mr Hardy

Gilchrist No, it's not And there's a couple of backbones wrapped up out there on the porch for you to boil of a Sunday

Mag Thanky, thanky Come on, Lonie

[*LONIE gets up and follows MAG*]  
Good night, you all

Gilchrist See you tomorrow some time

Mrs Gilchrist Good night

[*MAG and LONIE go out*]

Gilchrist Etta, I want to tell you how sorry I am you saw all that—I'm sorry

Mrs Gilchrist Now, Hardy, it's come upon you at the last

Gilchrist I know I've done wrong I wish it had never happened I wrote a note and sent it to him, telling him so I want him to come back, you know I do

Mrs Gilchrist You see what can happen to a man proud in his own might

Gilchrist If I could just get the feeling of his face from my hand [*Growling*] Stop Don't bring it up to me any more

Mrs Gilchrist All these years you've

stood out and matched your strength against God, and now I been setting here by the fire since supper, running it all through my mind It's God's work

*Gilchrist* What's God got to do with my—my hitting Neill?

*Mrs Gilchrist* [*breathing heavily*] He's got everything to do with it He can keep your heart purified and save you from strange women

*Gilchrist* [*in amazement*] Etta!

*Mrs Gilchrist* He can keep you from temptation He can open your eyes and show you the gin of the adversary set for your unwary feet

*Gilchrist* [*after a moment, coldly*] Well, you pray for me, then

*Mrs Gilchrist* [*with a sob*] I've prayed and prayed and prayed And all this time you've hardened your heart, and now you've brought shame down upon you and your household You've got to reach in your heart and tear this sin out by the roots

*Gilchrist* [*uncertainly*] What sin, Etta?

*Mrs Gilchrist* [*panting*] You know what sin [*With a sort of chant*] And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out [*Raising her clasped hands above her*] This house must be purified

*Gilchrist* What you mean?

*Mrs Gilchrist* [*weeping*] Hardy, Hardy, can't you see where you are going? Whoever looketh on a woman—as the Saviour said—[*Crying out*] Thou shalt not—

*Gilchrist* [*jumping up and walking across the room*] Stop! stop! [*Looking at her in concern*] You're tired and excited, girl

[*He goes through the door at the rear In a moment he returns with a stone churn in his hands and sets it near the fire MRS GILCHRIST dries her eyes and sits up cold and straight With an effort he retains control of himself He turns to her kindly and abstractedly*]

She told me to set her milk to turn, and I was about to forget it

*Mrs Gilchrist* [*softly*] Her milk

*Gilchrist* [*controlling his impatience*] That's just a way of speaking, Etta

*Mrs Gilchrist* Yes, yes, her broom, her chairs, her everything I'm in the way, but I'll live to save you from yourself I've prayed to God, and he's promised me that

*Gilchrist* [*bitterly*] Then pray again and ask him to wipe out what happened be-

tween me and Neill today Wipe out his black and bitter words and send him back here where he belongs

*Mrs Gilchrist* They can't be wiped out They were the truth

*Gilchrist* [*shouting*] Etta!

*Mrs Gilchrist* [*putting out a weak hand*] If I die the next minute, I know it's the truth You've looked on her, yes, you have — [*Hoarsely*] and it's a horrible sin against me and against God [*She closes her eyes and leans back in her chair*] There's no difference between the thought and the deed And for all I know— [*Her voice dies away*]

*Gilchrist* [*dropping down in his chair, thunderstruck*] Well, by God in heaven!

*Mrs Gilchrist* You love her Yes, you do! Yes, you do! [*She waits, staring at him with her gaunt, shining eyes*]

*Gilchrist* I won't say any more to you

*Mrs Gilchrist* [*with a gasp*] And she loves you I've known it a long time from the way she sews for you and fixes things and can't ever get enough of slaving for you Oh, God above, this house is accursed! She's tried to hide it, but I've seen it, and today I've heard more of it from other lips

*Gilchrist* Who's been talking again—Jacob?

*Mrs Gilchrist* He knew something of what he said

*Gilchrist* The poor damned old—but he can't help it, I reckon

*Mrs Gilchrist* It's the truth

*Gilchrist* Etta, listen to me!

*Mrs Gilchrist* There's nothing you can say, Hardy Tomorrow Rhoda gets her things and leaves here

*Gilchrist* We'll come to that later Listen to me now

*Mrs Gilchrist* [*hungrily*] Tell me you don't love her

*Gilchrist* Let's get at the truth I'll tell you everything that's passed between Rhody and me Last summer—it was August and about sunset down there in the bottom—she was helping me pile up the hay, and there by her something—I felt—well, you wouldn't understand

*Mrs Gilchrist* I would! I would!

*Gilchrist* No, well— [*In harassed eagerness*] I kissed her You can call it what you want Since then I've kept my vow I've not looked at her, and that's the God's

truth It was wrong to kiss her, and I know it, but there's no use denying I done it

*Mrs Gilchrist* Telling about it don't make it right before God

*Gilchrist* I'm not trying to make it right with God, but with you

*Mrs Gilchrist* Nor with me, either And I'll tell you something [*Closing and unclosing her hands*] I told you once I'd been a barren, childless woman, but I never told you why I will now

*Gilchrist* I've said, Etta, it's not your fault Such things are mysteries I've never blamed you

*Mrs Gilchrist* Me? Me? How about you? You are to blame

*Gilchrist* Me?

*Mrs Gilchrist* You've never thought of that It's the truth God wouldn't let you have children because you didn't believe in Him

*Gilchrist* [*after a moment, sadly*] Do you believe that?

*Mrs Gilchrist* I know it

*Gilchrist* Yes, you do, I guess [*Kindly*] You've suffered more than I thought

*Mrs Gilchrist* Then don't bring more on me After what's happened between you and Neill today, she can't stay here any more People are bound to talk about the sin of it

*Gilchrist* Let 'em talk They'll talk more if she goes away We'll think of something to do Stop fretting now, you'll worry yourself into your grave

*Mrs Gilchrist* And that's what you want me to do You and her both would be glad to see me carried out through that door feet foremost to the tomb

*Gilchrist* [*helplessly*] Etta!

*Mrs Gilchrist* But you won't see it I'll live and save you yet . . . Now, you listen to me We're going to settle things tonight She's got to leave, I tell you, and that tomorrow

*Gilchrist* [*shaking his head*] You needn't say that She came here for us to take care of, and we're going to do it

*Mrs Gilchrist* If she stays, you're both lost and ruined I'm the one that had her to come You didn't want her.

*Gilchrist* Maybe—maybe she'll bring Neill to his right mind Yes, maybe they'd get married some day

*Mrs Gilchrist* You don't believe that,

and you don't want it to happen She's got to leave

*Gilchrist* They's no place for her to go, and let's say no more about it

*Mrs Gilchrist* Aha! [*Struggling for her breath*] If she stays here, I'll go out, afflicted as I am, and shame you before the world

*Gilchrist* [*incredulously*] You?

*Mrs Gilchrist* I'd tell the world about you two living here in sin Where would the neighbors' honor and respect for you go then?

*Gilchrist* [*now angry*] And what would you do if I say I'd go? [*Savagely*] And turn the hogs into the fields and let the cows and mules into the barn and devour all I've made like the locusts of Egypt!

*Mrs Gilchrist* [*eyeing him*] You'd never go You care more for your work than God or woman—you—you man! You care more for your work—for yourself it is—than all the world [*Gasping*] Don't you guess that all these years I've learned to know you? I've never stood against you before, but I will now If I am sickly and half dead, I won't give in She's got to leave If she stays here, it'll be over my dead body, and the curse of the Almighty on you and her

[*Light footsteps are heard coming up the porch MRS GILCHRIST rises out of her seat and clings to the back of her chair*]

That's her now, and I won't stay and look upon her face Tomorrow . . . [*Going across the room to the door at the right rear*] It's your immortal soul, Hardy, and her soul I'm thinking of I'm going to bed now

[*She goes into her room and closes the door GILCHRIST, as if awed at her manner, sits staring intently after her The door at the left rear opens and RHODA comes in She is dressed in a becoming hat, dark coat-suit, and trim shoes Her eyes are stained with weeping*]

*Rhoda* [*going to the fire*] What you looking at?

*Gilchrist* [*starting*] Nothing

[*She goes into her room at the left and takes off her hat and gloves When she returns, GILCHRIST stands up and gets her a chair*]

Warm yourself I'll go out and put up the horse

Rhoda I stopped by the barn and put him up

Gilchrist You shouldn't have done that

Rhoda [*sitting down*] I thought you'd be working at the meat still Did you get it all fixed?

Gilchrist Yes, Mag and Lonie stayed and helped

Rhoda [*leaning over and looking at the churn*] The milk's turned I believe I'll churn now

Gilchrist You've done enough for one day Have a good time?

Rhoda [*with a strained little laugh*] Not much

Gilchrist Did you give him my letter?

Rhoda No Here

[*She hands him the letter He looks at it and then throws it into the fire*]

Gilchrist [*after a moment*] What all did you play?

Rhoda "Fruit basket" and "Put a bird in my cup" and "Going to Jerusalem," and that's about all

Gilchrist Wisht I'd a' been there We used to play another game called "Weavin' the thimble" Foolish, but a lot of fun

Rhoda Where's Aunt Etta?

Gilchrist Gone to bed

Rhoda [*bowing her head*] Oh, Hardy!

Gilchrist I know [*Presently*] What you been crying about?

Rhoda Neill was there at the party, drunk, and he stood up in the middle of the floor and made a speech about me [*She hides her face in her hands*]

Gilchrist Not you by yourself, Rhody?

Rhoda No, about you and me together—yes

Gilchrist When he gets sober, he'll want to kill hisself I know him

Rhoda I couldn't stand it, and I run away and come home

Gilchrist What'd he say?

Rhoda He told everything he knew and more, and he hinted and winked about a lot of things [*Twisting her hands nervously*] Jacob saw us in the hay-field that evening He was passing along by the hedgerow

Gilchrist [*throwing out his hands*] There you are

Rhoda Neill told all that right before the crowd

Gilchrist Tomorrow it'll be all over the

neighborhood [*Raising his voice as if imitating some one*] There goes Hardy Gilchrist whose word has been his bond, a man among men, one I wanted my boys to pattern after All the time I trusted him he was Him running after a young girl before his wife . [*Groaning*] Ah, Rhody, I've lived on my good name My strength and my good name are all I've had I've thrown them away

Rhoda [*convulsively catching his hand*] I've done it, not you [*He gestures*] Now don't, it's true

Gilchrist It's not your fault

Rhoda If we could just call back that one time

Gilchrist You wish it hadn't happened?

Rhoda [*in a low voice*] I'll always remember it, and be glad just the same But it's you I hate it for

Gilchrist [*in a low voice*] I'll always carry it with me, Rhody—the—kiss you gave me and—and—the words you said [*Striking his knee with his fist*] I don't care if all the angels in the sky said it was wrong I'd know it wa'n't

Rhoda And I'd know it wa'n't

Gilchrist [*straightening himself up*] So [*He stops and says no more*]

Rhoda [*in a hushed voice*] The fields and the sweet hay and the sunset there—and Oh, it will be with me till I die!

Gilchrist [*leaning towards her*] Hush! Hush! [*He puts his hand on her shoulder and then suddenly draws it away*] Tomorrow I'll go down and talk to Neill and tell him everything Mebbe he'll understand

Rhoda And tomorrow I'm going away never to come back.

Gilchrist No, no, you can't That won't settle it, Rhody The only thing you can do is—to marry Neill

Rhoda [*looking at him*] I don't love him

Gilchrist We've got to live among people and we've got to do what we don't want to—sometimes

Rhoda [*the tears running down her cheeks*] I'll go away, and folks will forget, and all can be like it was before I come [*She stands up*]

Gilchrist Where'd you go?

Rhoda I'll go back to town or somewhere and work, and I'll leave all these fields and things behind [*She stifles a sob in her handkerchief*] But I won't be able to get 'em out of my mind to save my soul

*Gilchrist* A-ah, child [*Abruptly*] I don't see no way but for you to marry him

*Rhoda* If you just knew how I feel and will to the grave, Hardy, you'd see what a sin it is to talk of Neill

*Gilchrist* [*brokenly*] Yes, yes, and I love you It's you I was made for

[*Suddenly he takes her in his arms and kisses her In a moment she pushes his face away and with her head against his breast stands clinging to him GILCHRIST looks out before him*]

I don't care what they do, they shan't take you away from me Let 'em talk and let 'em laugh and mock me I'll keep you before the whole world

*Rhoda* [*pushing him away*] No, no I've got to go Let this be the last, Hardy, forever [*She looks up at him and, catching his face in her hands, rises on her tiptoes and kisses him*] That's for good-by now

*Gilchrist* [*recklessly*] Then I'll go, too I'll go where you go and be with you

*Rhoda* No, no, let me loose I'll pack my trunk now [*Shivering*] After tonight I won't see you any more Now leave me [*She pushes him from her and moves into her room*]

*Gilchrist* Oh, Rhody!

*Rhoda* [*suddenly turning back and throwing her arms around his neck*] I can't go from you I'll die without you You're my man, my god—everything to me [*She kisses him in an abandonment of love and grief*]

*Gilchrist* [*hoarsely*] And you are mine

*Rhoda* [*holding him by the hand*] Yes, yes [*Her face aflame*] Yours—forever [*She moves within the door, her eyes closed and her head bent down*]

*Gilchrist* [*softly*] Rhody

*Rhoda* [*looking about her in the room and whispering*] The nights and nights I've lain on that bed and thought of you Oh, Hardy, Hardy!

[*She leans against him and he bends over her, stroking her hair Mrs GILCHRIST opens the door and stands watching them Gradually the strength seems to go out of her, and with a low cry she falls upon her knees*]

*Mrs Gilchrist* God have mercy upon their pore souls! [*She sinks down in a moaning heap*]

*Gilchrist* [*springing around*] Etta!

*Mrs Gilchrist* [*raising her head*] Don't

touch me [*Screaming*] Keep your hands off of me!

*Gilchrist* [*hurrying to her and picking her up in his arms*] What is it, Etta? [*He carries her into the bedroom and is heard laying her on the bed*]

*Rhoda* [*standing alone in the room*] Oh, my Lord!

*Mrs Gilchrist* [*moaning within*] You cursed and defiled—you black of heart God will Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord

[*Her voice dies away, and for a while there is no sound in the entire house*]

*Gilchrist* [*sharply*] Come here, Rhody, quick!

*Rhoda* [*horror-stricken and motionless*] Don't call me! Don't!

*Gilchrist* [*in a moment, coming back*] Did you hear her? [*Husily*] Hear her curse?

[*He looks heavily about the room and then sits down in a chair Rhoda stands in her tracks, looking at him, helpless and terror-stricken The door at the left rear opens, and AUNT MARGARET comes in*]

*Rhoda* [*running to her*] Aunt Margaret! Aunt Margaret [*gazing at her an instant and then coming by her to GILCHRIST*] What is it, son?

*Gilchrist* [*springing up and holding her to him*] Etta She's dead, Aunt Margaret Aunt Margaret [*with a gasping moan*] Lord ha' mercy!

*Gilchrist* She died all of a sudden [*Pointing behind him*] There

[*AUNT MARGARET pushes him down in his seat again, hugs his head against her breast a moment, and then goes into the room at the right rear and gets down on her knees by the bed Her childish voice is heard quavering out a prayer*]

*Rhoda* [*whispering*] Hardy, look at me  
*Gilchrist* [*with his head still bowed*] Listen

### ACT THREE

#### SCENE ONE

The back yard and rear part of the Gilchrist farmhouse, several months later It is a late afternoon in summer The china tree is in full leaf, and the green cotton-

*fields stretch away to the left Morning-glories have been planted along the porch, winding up the columns in leafy thickness, and the well has been replaced by a pump Clumps of flowers have been planted in the yard* MAG is at the tub, washing *The wire running from the outhouse to the porch is hung with freshly washed clothes*

Mag [*singing to herself with mournful introspection*]

"Get up in the morning,  
Trouble bothers my mind,  
I go to bed at evening,  
It's trouble all the time

Oh, I wisht I'd heeded what my mammy said

Oh—and now I wisht that I was lying dead

"He come by my window,  
All in the sweet springtime,  
I rose up to listen,  
Nothing to bother my mind

Oh, I wisht I'd heeded what my mammy said

Oh—and now I wisht that I was lying dead"

[LONIE comes quietly in from the left rear and stands by the wash-bench]

Mag [*starting*] Lord! you skeered me, Lonie!

Lonie I thought I'd come down and maybe help you

Mag You can start washing in that tub

Lonie [*holding up a garment from her tub*] Mis' Etta's dress, pore soul, ain't it?

Mag Yeh, I found it back in the closet this morning That dress brings it all back to me It was a fair day when she put it on She come out on the porch there and called to me and said look at it And she had a little bit of lace on the collar or something But, Lord! I couldn't help seeing her pale face and hollow eyes like a body looking in the tomb

Lonie [*soaping the dress on the board*] Reckon she sees me washing out her dress from up there?

Mag No doubt she does, while she's a-singing with her harp It's good they got music up there, for she did like to play and sing here below

Lonie Yeh, she did [*After a moment*] Seems quare, jest like I mought any minute feel her flesh inside this here dress

Mag Pime-blank the way I've felt seeing her shoes setting there about and her specs and snuff-box on the mantelpiece by the clock And yistiddy I found a ball of her knitting with the needles stuck in it

Lonie [*wheezily*] Anh, everybody has to give up what they're a-doing some day and stop it

Mag That they do And dying won't keep things from going right on and on They'll be marrying and giving in marriage still

Lonie Yeh, they will

Mag If I ain't mistook, they's a wedding going on some'ers now

Lonie Is it them two?

Mag They dressed up and drove off this morning about ten o'clock—Miss Rhody all dolled up in finery and looking like a queen, and he with his black suit and starched collar and shirt on [*Shaking her head*] Well, let 'em, pore things, fer if two souls ever loved one another, them two does But they ain't so happy, though, at times Sump'n's weighing down on 'em

Lonie I see she was a-loving him a month adder she come down hyuh from Durham

Mag And Mis' Etta seed it, too, pore thing That's what help put her in her grave, 'twixt you and me

Lonie Yeh, yeh

Mag Still, she hadn't ort to mind, fer she's dead and gone, and nothing can't hurt her there

Lonie Hardy needs a wife like Miss Rhody

Mag Well, I hope they're gitting married, for I don't want to stay here another night [*Looking intently at LONIE*] I tell you I don't

Lonie I wouldn't sleep in that there house for nothing

Mag And I ain't gonna stay in there nary another un Listen! Last night, Lonie, some time 'way in the night I woke up and couldn't hardly breathe They was somebody in the room I felt it

Lonie Nanh, nanh!

Mag I struck a light, but they warn't nobody there Then I heard sump'n' like in the wall trying to git out I couldn't sleep another wink And this morning the new plaster was cracked acrost

Lonie [*holding up the dead woman's dress fearfully*] Lordy!

[*They wash away in silence LONIE wrings out Mrs GILCHRIST's dress and*

*hangs it carefully on the line, the two sleeves stretched widely out and caught to the wire by clothes-pins Presently old JACOB and his boy SION come around the house at the rear and sit down on the pump platform JACOB carries a trowel and level in his hand, and SION carries a shovel]*

*Jacob [taking off his hat and wiping his face with his sleeve]* How you all come on?

*Mag [airily]* Well as common You well?

*Jacob* Right well fer sich stirring times, and it so hot [*Gazing at the morning-glories*] Anh, them flowers do grow Makes everything look purty around hyuh

*Sion [as if stating a colorless fact]* Mis' Rhody planted 'em

*Jacob* Aye, reckon she did I'll declare this place has changed the most Coming up the road there I got to thinking how fine everything looked New columns on the front porch, and window shutters, and a new pump hyuh, too

*Mag* Yeh, he shore has fixed up things the last few months

*Jacob* Heh-heh, he has! [*Winking*] That whole front yard looks pime-blank like a flower garden

*Sion [as before]* Mis' Rhody likes flowers Mis' Etta didn't keer nothing for 'em

*Jacob* And them new lightning-rods on top of the house shore do shine fine in the sun, heh-heh Now since Mis' Etta ain't hyuh to pray for him, Hardy must be afraid the Upper Powers is going to strak him dead with some o' their fire

*Mag [sharply]* He mought

*Jacob [winking again and spitting profusely]* Heh-heh! he mought be fearful of it

*Sion* That there's Mis' Etta's dress there dripping on the line

*Jacob [mournfully]* And I seed her a-wearing it onct 'Twas a sunny day What's become of all her things, pore critter? [*Without waiting for an answer*] Looks like the young un would wear 'em

*Mag* She wouldn't put one of 'em on fer the wide world

*Jacob* Heh-heh! no, I reckon she wouldn't Well, they's a lot o' good clothes going to waste, I betcha

*Mag* They's a whole trunkful of things Miss Rhody put 'em away one morning, crying like her heart would break

*Jacob* That there's a good gal for you, Mag, if I do say it myself

*Mag [dipping clothes from the pot and carrying them to the tub on a stick]* You've said a lot of hard words about her, Jacob

*Jacob* And looks like you'd have a lot to say—staying in the house with them these months Heh-heh! you're the right one to chapyrone 'em, Mag

*Mag* I know when to hold my tongue Some folks don't

*Jacob* Nanh-nanh, I've jest said what the others said I ain't never wished her a grain o' harm, not me [*Excitedly*] But you jest wait till I tell you all the news, folkses

*Mag [angrily]* News—still a news-toter I've heard you at church laying Hardy out fer being a' infidel, and you used to talk about pore Mis' Etta, too, and both of 'em so good to you

*Jacob* But I've done her a good turn today, ain't we, Sion? And that'll help her to rest

*Sion* We have, I reckon

*Jacob* We jest finished putting up her tombstone at the church

*Mag* You have?

*Jacob* Yeh

*Sion* Shore a purty un

*Jacob* With two hands a-shaking on it and a verse cut under it saying "Asleep in Jesus" So she's fixed and complete now and can rest till the Judgment Day When we was done, Aunt Marg'ret come by and we said a little bit of a prayer over her And Aunt Marg'ret sent up a long prayer for Hardy's soul, didn't she, Sion?

*Sion [slicking down his hair]* She got down and prayed out loud

*Jacob [wiping his eyes]* And the pure tears come up in my eyes a-thinking on Mis' Etta, pore thing

*Mag* I bet they did, and I bet Sion bel-lowed like a calf

*Sion [sullenly]* Not me, I ain't no calf—I tell you

*Mag* Hardy didn't know the tombstone had come

*Jacob* That he didn't and he off—off But I'm a-coming to that, folkses The man brung it over from the depot this morning Hardy'd done told me he wanted to put it up when it did come And I went and got Sandy and his two boys, and we sot it



*[He suddenly breaks into a long toothless laugh]*

Mag A tombstone's a quare thing to be laughing about

Jacob *[wiping his eyes]* It ain't that, no sree, it ain't that I've got a piece of news fer ye What you reckon that depot man told me while he was unloading Mis' Etta's stone? Heh-heh He told me he saw Hardy and the gal driving the fine new horse out o' town a-flying towards Dunn And, folkses, they was married at the courthouse this morning *[He slaps his leg with his hat]* And here I set waiting to welcome the bride and groom, and Sion, too

Sion *[polishing his nails]* Me, too

Jacob *[sadly]* Bad fer pore Sion to lose his sweetheart that-a-way But you'll git you another un, boy You and Neill can go out courting together now

Mag Has Neill heard about 'em marry-ing?

Jacob I told him

Mag *[scornfully]* Course you did

Jacob And he's coming up to welcome 'em home Now if you got a little o' that good wine in the house for Neill, we'll git ready to celebrate

Mag You better go down that road and tell Neill Sykes not to come up here There's been enough trouble Apt as not he'll come drunk ag'in, like he's been half the summer

Jacob A-ah, he's lost faith in man and woman too, Mag Who wouldn't drink in sich a fix?

Mag If you'd 'a' kept your long tongue out of it, him and Mr Hardy might 'a' been friends ag'in long ago

Jacob *[angrily]* Why, I talked to him and Hardy's talked to him, and it don't do no good He's done quit old man Turner and don't do nothin' but lie in his daddy's house and eat and sleep *[Sorrowfully]* He's runt fer good!

Mag And you helped run him, you and him off together drunk every two weeks

Jacob Not me, Mag He tempts me, no doubt, and I'd ort not to give in to him

Mag Next month the preachers'll be after you at big meeting, and you'll be up testifying and praising God and asking 'em to pray for you

Jacob We are all weak and empty vessels, Mag

*[Neill comes in around the house, un-*

*shaven and haggard He has been drinking]*

Neill *[shouting]* Hooray for the bride and groom!

*[He sits down on the porch before the kitchen door MAG and LONIE hang out the last garment]*

Jacob Hooray!

Mag You'd better stop that hooraying and go back home, if you know what's good fer you

Neill The happy couple come yet?

Jacob Not yit We'll jest set and wait fer 'em Neill

*[LONIE sits down on the wash-bench]*

Mag I'm going in, Lonie, and tie up my clothes I won't be needed hyuh tonight

Jacob *[chuckling]* That you won't Mag. Hardy and the gal will be enough—heh-heh!

*[MAG goes up the porch and into the house]*

Neill *[with a magnanimous wave of his arm]* Come over hyuh, Jacob! Come over, I got sump'n' purty for you And you too, Sion!

Jacob Nanh-nanh, Neill, I'd jest as leave set hyuh

Sion *[sullenly]* I don't want nothing.

Neill Come on over, I tell you

*[They move over to him and sit down on the porch NEILL pulls a large flask of whisky from his pocket]*

How's that for joy and singing at a wedding!

Jacob *[looking at LONIE]* No, no, Neill, I can't now I've quit

Neill Quit! When, this morning? Hyuh, if you don't drink, you ain't my friend *[He hands the flask to Jacob]*

Jacob Well, what kin a body do? We are commanded to be friends one with another *[Spitting out his tobacco and uncorking the flask]* They was spirits at the wedding in Canaan, and here's to everybody *[He takes a deep drink]* A-n-h!

Neill *[taking the flask from him and drinking]* Here's to him and to her, by God! *[He pushes the flask into Sion's hands]*

Jacob Heh-heh! I be danged, Neill Yeh, hyuh's to 'em

Neill Drink some o' this fire and git some color in your cheeks

*[Sion raises the bottle and drinks, his face crawling in pain under the burning liquor]*



Jacob Hyuh, hyuh, that's enough  
*[He takes the flask from Sion and drinks again MAG comes hurrying out of the house, carrying a bundle of clothes in her hand]*

Mag *[quickly]* Come on, Lonie

Jacob Now what's happened to you?

Mag *[dropping down on the pump platform]* I just can't stand it here no more

Jacob. What, the house ain't ha'nted, is it?

Mag When I come out of her room with my clothes, I thought I saw Mis' Etta at the orgin

Jacob *[giving a squeak]* Nanh, nanh, you couldn't

Mag And when I looked ag'in, it wa'n't her But it all made me so jumpy

Lonie *[in a low throaty voice]* She can't rest in her grave

Sion *[whimpering]* I hear that orgin playing!

Jacob *[drinking from the flask and appealing to NEILL]* It ain't so Don't you know 'tain't so?

Neill *[springing up and waving his hat]* Hooray fer the wedding! Now we'll have a grand reception The old woman's come back from her grave to help welcome 'em to her bed

*[The hoofbeats of a trotting horse are heard down the lane NEILL staggers to the left of the house and stands looking off around behind it He comes back into the yard]*

Yonder they come, burning the wind A-ah, but they're in a hurry *[Brandishing his flask]* It's love, love burning 'em up and driving 'em on

*[The buggy draws up and stops before the house SION suddenly begins to cry JACOB gives him a drunken punch]*

Jacob Stop it, boy There comes Miss Rhody You don't want to let her see you

*[SION snuffles in his sleeve They listen, and RHODA is heard entering the house at the front]*

Mag Come on, Lonie, le's leave hyuh

*[LONIE gets up and follows her across the yard]*

Neill, you and Jacob better go on away from hyuh I tell you you better

*[RHODA comes down the porch at the right, wearing a long, gray, clinging dress and a pale-green scarf thrown*

*over her shoulders She starts back on seeing NEILL]*

Neill *[bowing low]*. Greetings to the bride

Rhoda Are you going, Mag?

Mag You won't need me tonight, will you? *[JACOB bursts into a guffaw]*

Rhoda *[looking at him sharply]* All right Did you get through the wash?

Mag Yes'm *[Hurriedly]* Come on, Lonie, le's git away.

*[They go quickly off at the left RHODA stands looking after them, perplexed]*

Neill Where's the happy groom?

Rhoda *[brushing her hand across her face]* Hardy's putting up the horse, Neill Is there anything I can do for you and Jacob?

Neill Not now by a damn sight!

Jacob *[winking]* No'm, Neill and me and Sion jest want to bid you welcome into the holy state of matrimony Don't we, Sion?

Sion *[giggling drunkenly through his tears]* Merry Christmas to you, Miss Rhody *[He leans against a post, slobbering, with his tongue hanging out]*

Rhoda You've been giving him liquor, Neill?

Neill *[waving his flask]* We're all drinking to your honor *[Holding out the flask]* And won't you join with us to celebrate?

Jacob Wedding and love—heh-heh!

Rhoda *[shrinking back against the wall]* Stop it, please! Oh, Neill, please go away!

Neill *[clinging to the porch post]* What's wrong with me? Ain't I sober as a judge, sober as that damned Hardy Gilchrist you'll sleep—hah-hah-hah!

*[RHODA turns and starts to move away up the porch]*

Jacob Course he's sober, we're all sober And they ain't no harm in tasting a drap to you

Neill And this is my farewell party to everybody I've joined Uncle Sam's men, and tomorrow I'm going to the army And I got my gatling gun with me *[He pulls out a pistol and brandishes it in the air]*

Jacob Gonna be a soldier, Neill Hooray—fight for your country! *[He eyes NEILL foolishly]*

Neill *[putting the pistol back in his pocket]* I signed up yistiddy in Dunn In a week I'll be on the border, killing Mexicans *[He suddenly waves his flask like a*

saber and marches up and down the yard, singing]

"Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching"

[He makes a drunken salute and then waves his hands unsteadily over the fields] What's in this farming and sweating your insides out? Nothing It's war for me in the service of the flag I hate them fields out there I hate everybody I hate Hardy Gilchrist and all he's done to me I hope to God trouble comes on him like hail outn the sky till it beats him to the earth as low-down as me [His voice breaking in drunken sobs] He's laid awake at night and hatched his plans and sot his steel trap to ketch me in Jacob knows he has And he's caught me all right I'm down hyuh lower'n a nigger, and he's up there with his woman like God A'mighty on the throne

Rhoda [moaning] Oh, Neill, don't, don't

Neill [throwing his flask from him and breaking it to pieces against the side of the outhouse] He's ploughed me in the fields like a damned old steer, night and day he's drove me on in a yoke with him I've dug in his bottoms, and rooted up stumps a' engine couldn't budge, and dug in his ditches and cut away his briars and hedges for him And all the time he's sot back and smiled at his eating me up in his hopper Look at his hogs and mules and corn and his hay piled up higher'n a barn and his money rusting in a bank—I helped make it, these hyuh two arms piled it up for him [Spitting] Ah, he takes all and leaves me nothing [Singing]

"Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching"

Cheer up, comrades, they will come "

[Old JACOB takes up the song and begins marching with him RHODA runs into the house and shuts the door behind her Presently NEILL stops and puts his hands to his head, swaying from side to side]

Jacob [belching and looking out at the fields] He's done me the same way, Neill, the same way Hyuh I've lived on his land for ten long year, and what have I got? Durn his black soul Me'n Nancy ain't got nothing, nothing, and all my little ones left twittering in the cold Sion there'll be left a pore boy without a cent in the world A-ah, he's et the fat of the land and fed

us the husks and crumbs God is hard on the poor harlings and tenants

[GILCHRIST is heard entering the house]

Neill Come on, there's the bridegroom coming in to the bride [He pulls Sion up and starts across the yard toward the rear]

Jacob Leave 'em alone—heh-heh!

[NEILL stops and looks around him He points to the outhouse door]

Neill Let's git in there I ain't gonna leave him yit We'll come out and serenade the devil torectly

Jacob We'll watch 'em—heh-heh!

[After much clambering and pushing they succeed in getting over the door-sill Presently GILCHRIST and RHODA come down the porch]

Gilchrist Where is he?

Rhoda Don't say anything to him, Hardy He's drunk and out of his head almost, and he's got a pistol

Gilchrist [looking around] They all must have gone [He steps down in the yard and walks to the end of the house] Jacob!

Rhoda They've gone, thank the Lord [She comes down into the yard and stands beside GILCHRIST] I'd give anything if he was back our friend again [Holding to GILCHRIST's arm] It makes me feel awful to think of him . If he could just forgive us and be at peace!

Gilchrist Aye, I'd like everybody to be at peace today, tonight

[They stand looking out over the cotton-fields towards the red of the sunset From behind a small cloud that hangs above the pines to the west the light from the hidden sun spreads up across the sky like the spangles of a great exploded rocket GILCHRIST puts his arm around RHODA]

Yes, I'd like for all the hard words and the bitterness to be wiped out everywhere It's like ashes in my mouth to think of Neill

Rhoda Maybe he'll come back from the army with it all forgot

Gilchrist The army!

Rhoda He's going off tomorrow

Gilchrist Anh! worse and worse The army I'll miss him, and them fields'll miss him And as for him, he can't never forget 'em [Sighing] Still, maybe it's for the best Now let's go in

Rhoda [softly] To our house

[They step up on the porch, and GIL-

CHRIST turns and looks out at the fields and sky, RHODA leaning against him]

Gilchrist Let's try to forget all our trouble now

Rhoda Yes

Gilchrist Rest against me and put all the things that worry you out of your mind

Rhoda I'll try I will, Hardy [Smiling up at him] And you rest against me

Gilchrist Ah! [After a moment] Look at that sky full of glory over there, Rhody, and the trees reaching around the fields like shutting off all the world for you and me

Rhoda Yes, yes

Gilchrist [looking up at the sky] If there's any place up there beyond the stars like Etta believed, I know she sees us and is satisfied You believe it's so, don't you?

Rhoda She can't hold it against us any longer I know she can't

Gilchrist No, for now she'd understand and know how hard it's been for you and me, what we've suffered and gone through with all these months

Rhoda Yes [Softly] And we'll still have to suffer, Hardy

Gilchrist Ah, that we will People will go on talking, but we'll live it down We'll make 'em believe in us We'll give to the poor and afflicted, live upright before them, and this house shall be like a well of kindness in a weary land

Rhoda It will, we'll make it so

Gilchrist [exultantly] And in these fields we'll toil and labor and bring forth fruit a hundredfold and more—[with a wide gesture of his arm] toiling and sweating and happy for the joy and the life that's in us, Rhody

Rhoda [with a broken sob] I could die with you now just about and not be sorry

Gilchrist [holding her tightly to him] And we'll raise up sons and daughters, Rhody, many of 'em, as strong and solid as the dirt out there—that will bless us and bless the world around 'em And we'll go down into the grave, them blessing us [He bends his head over her] If there was a God, I'd call upon him, bow my knees in worship to him, for we are happy now

[His voice dying out] Happy at last [He kisses her and stares down into her face worshipfully]

Rhoda [throwing her arms around him]

You are great and wonderful, and I feel as nothing before you

[A little gale of mocking laughter trickles out of the outhouse. It dies away and then sounds again]

Gilchrist [horrified] What's that? Who's out there?

[In the silence the chickens are heard flapping their wings and making muffled noises on the roost]

Rhoda It was the chickens going to roost

Gilchrist [looking about] Maybe it was nothing [Bending tenderly over her] Let's go in now, honey

[With his arm around her they go up the porch Again the laughter breaks across the yard GILCHRIST starts back as if struck]

Who's that!

[As he turns again down the porch, the outhouse door opens, and NEILL, Old JACOB and SION tumble out NEILL has a guano trumpet in his hand, and old JACOB carries the joint of a stovepipe and a stick in his hand They are drunker than ever]

Neill Hooray for the bride and groom! Jacob Hooray!

[NEILL blows a blast upon his trumpet old JACOB beats the stovepipe, and SION claps his hands]

Neill We've come to serenade you

[They stagger up and down the yard, blowing and beating SION makes his way over to the bell-post and leans against it, slobbering]

Gilchrist [shouting above the din] Neill, stop that foolishness!

Neill [lowering his trumpet and leering up at them] My best wishes to you I hope you sweet sleep and great joy

[GILCHRIST starts out of the porch, but RHODA pulls him back]

Jacob The same here, Hardy, with all my heart

Neill May God A'mighty set a burning mark on you and give you no peace and send you a gang of children with the head of calves A brood of goats and cows and singing adders, by God! Yea, I hope they'll be snake-headed, for you're both snakes in the grass!

Jacob [beating on his stovepipe] Heh-heh-heh! and die without a roof over their heads

Gilchrist [groaning and throwing out his

hands! So be it Neill, you're drunk—a-ah, Jacob! Let's go in, Rhody

*[He bows his head, and he and RHODA go up the porch and into the house NEILL and his companions fall to their blowing and beating again]*

Neill *[shouting]* You two dirty hogs!

*[GILCHRIST rushes out through the door and down the porch, and then stops again, staring at them NEILL shouts]*

You two dirty—

Gilchrist Neill!

Neill Hogs and—whores—God damn you!

*[He marches up and down the yard, singing]*

"Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching"

*[He pulls out his pistol and suddenly shoots himself in the breast He stands swaying a moment, a strange surprised look spreading over his face, and then falls heavily in the yard JACOB stands looking at him crazily, beating abstractedly upon his stovepipe, and SION begins tolling the bell]*

Jacob Heh-heh! What you doing like that fer, Neill? Heigh, don't play like that!

Neill *[with a sharp, childlike cry]* Mr Hardy! Help me!

Gilchrist *[rushing down the porch]* What—great God! Rhody, Rhody, Neill's shot himself!

*[He hurries into the yard and drops down on his knees beside NEILL In a moment he turns away and stares at the ground JACOB looks on in amazement, his mouth open and slobbering like SION's, and tapping with his stick as if in a dream RHODA comes slowly down the porch GILCHRIST looks at her in anguish]*

He's gone

Rhoda *[stopping suddenly at the edge of the porch]* Oh, I can't . Come away, Hardy!

*[She bows her head, weeping, but still she comes on out into the yard as if moved by an unconscious will within her Catching hold of GILCHRIST, she tries to pull him up to her]*

Gilchrist *[shouting at JACOB]* Stop that beating!—SION!

*[SION stands looking at them, terrified Presently he begins to sob JACOB comprehends what has happened, and with a drunken squeal of terror scram-*

*bles out at the left rear GILCHRIST raises his head and looks at ETTA's dress hanging on the wire like something crucified RHODA stands close to him and pulls his head over against her, her face pale and drawn and her lips speechless]*

## ACT FOUR

### SCENE ONE

The Gilchrist sitting room, a few months later The room is furnished much as before except that a center table with a vase of flowers has taken the place of the organ, a new bureau with a mirror has been placed at the left, and a few sprays of red and russet autumn leaves are set decoratively in pots in the corners of the room It is a cold Sunday in late October, and a log fire is smoldering in the fireplace RHODA GILCHRIST, dressed in a loose sweater and wrapper, her hair hanging down in two shining braids, sits leaning over in her chair before the fire Her face is drawn and pale now and is heightened into the indecisive childishness of one helpless in the midst of a suffering neither understood nor wholly accepted After a moment she rises and stares about her uncertainly Finally she takes up the Bible from the table with a touch of furtiveness and sits down, reading it Now and then her words are audible as she reads

Rhoda "For whilst I held my tongue, my bones consumed away through my daily complaining For thy hand is heavy upon me day and night, and my moisture is like the drought in summer I will acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine unrighteousness have I not hid I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord, and so thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin" *[She turns restlessly through the pages]* "Blessed are they that fear the Lord and walk in his ways For thou shalt eat the labors of thine hands O well is thee and happy shalt thou be Thy wife shall be as the fruitful vine, upon the walls of thy house Thy children like the olive branches, round about thy table" Ah me! *[She clutches at her brow and goes on reading]* "Lo, thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord"

*Her voice dies to a mumble Presently HARDY GILCHRIST comes quietly in at the rear He is dressed in his Sunday best, his hair combed and brushed back, his dark clothes pressed and neat save for splotches of mud on his shoes The passing months have deepened certain lines of grimness and unhappiness in his face As he enters, RHODA looks up, startled, and lets the Bible slide down beside her in the chair]*

*Gilchrist [his face softening as he looks at her] You mustn't let the fire die down, honey [He stirs up the fire]*

*Rhoda [clutching his hand] Have you been walking again?*

*Gilchrist I was looking over the farm*

*Rhoda [shaking her head] Oh, Hardy!*

*Gilchrist Don't worry [Smiling] You see I don't*

*Rhoda I'm so weak—weak at times*

*Gilchrist Come rest in my arms, let me feel your head on my shoulder [He sits down and holds out his arms]*

*Rhoda And it ought to be your head resting on my breast*

*Gilchrist Not this time*

*[He takes her in his arms and sits rocking and soothing her She closes her eyes and, as he looks down at her, a haggard, restless look comes over his face He begins abstractedly pushing his hand through his hair]*

*Rhoda [looking up] Something—now, look, you're worrying again [She watches him intently and then sits up straight in his lap]*

*Gilchrist I'm not, I'm thinking*

*Rhoda About what?*

*Gilchrist Oh, nothing much—just thinking*

*Rhoda Tell me you love me*

*Gilchrist [kissing her] I do love you better than all the world You know it*

*Rhoda Yes, yes That ought to be enough for me, but still I get so afraid [Helplessly] Tell me why it is*

*Gilchrist You're sick and feel low, honey*

*Rhoda [after a moment, in a hidden voice] We've been married four months now, Hardy*

*Gilchrist Yes*

*Rhoda You know what I mean?*

*Gilchrist I guess so*

*Rhoda [clutching his coat] I'm afraid it*

*won't ever happen, and—and I'll be like—like her*

*Gilchrist Hush!*

*Rhoda My life and my love for you would be completed, and I'd have strength to endure anything they do to us*

*Gilchrist They'll soon forget everything, and be our friends again*

*Rhoda I love you so [Clutching his face between her hands and staring at him intensely] I felt so strong and young to be your wife And now I feel so weak*

*Gilchrist [restlessly] You've thought too much about what's happened and what people are saying No meaning in it*

*Rhoda Poor boy, how can I help it when I see it in your face? [Looking at him again intensely] Has anything else happened?*

*Gilchrist [caressing her] Oh, every time I go out, you think something bad has happened or is going to happen Of course not*

*Rhoda And I have reason to*

*Gilchrist Hanh? Yes, yes, in a way But that's part of living, I reckon*

*Rhoda Where have you been all the morning?*

*Gilchrist About the farm, I said [Picking up the Bible] Reading it again?*

*Rhoda I'm lonesome when you're away I was looking through it*

*Gilchrist I went by the pasture to see about the big hog*

*Rhoda Is he better?*

*Gilchrist I reckon so [Grimly] He was lying in the pen dead as a door knob*

*Rhoda Oh, Hardy [She looks at him a long while Whispering] It keeps being that way*

*Gilchrist I'd better not told you, then [With a faint touch of irritation] I've had cholera kill off my hogs before [He pulls her tight in his arms] Rest and go to sleep now Everything is so quiet just us here nobody else in the world forget everything Now, child*

*Rhoda [starting up] I felt something sharp in your pocket [She reaches in his coat and pulls out a butcher knife]*

*Gilchrist [taking it quickly from her] I saw it lying there in the field where I threw it that day*

*Rhoda I don't like to see it*

*[He lays the knife on the mantelpiece*

*RHODA watches it]*

*I don't like for it to be up there*

*Gilchrist [starting] All right [He gets*

the knife down and holds it undecidedly in his hand]

Rhoda Burn it

[He looks at her sharply and then throws the knife into the fire]

Gilchrist You can't burn it up—nothing but the handle The blade's steel

[RHODA gets up and sits in her chair]

Rhoda No, no, let me sit here Everything is too still

Gilchrist [standing up and taking off his coat] I'm going up to the pasture

Rhoda I wish you wouldn't

Gilchrist Mag will stay with you

Rhoda She's gone home to look after Lomie

Gilchrist [turning about] All right, then [He punches the fire and stands a moment, thinking Abstractedly he rolls up his sleeve and runs his hand back and forth along his forearm His face darkens with shaggy introspection]

Rhoda [smiling with weak and mournful teasingness] You're just about the strongest man in the world, I bet

Gilchrist [quickly] Hunh? No, not me

Rhoda [coming over to him and putting her arms around his neck] You're strong, stronger than any man—almost as strong as God himself [Earnestly] Tell me you are

Gilchrist [kissing her] You make me strong [Indulgently] Yes, then, I am

[He hugs her to him and puts his face against her hair But again she makes a restless movement from him The door at the left rear opens cautiously, and old JACOB sticks his head in]

Jacob Kin a pore soul come in?

Gilchrist [releasing RHODA] Come on in [Old JACOB comes in, followed by SION They are both dressed in their preaching clothes JACOB with an old seedy brown suit, a collar without a tie, and a brown derby SION wears the same clothes as before, and his hair still keeps its greasy curls They respectfully sit down near the fire, and SION at once begins to polish his finger nails and arrange his hair with his blue looking-glass]

Jacob [his eyes glistening] Sorry I ketched you at it private, Hardy, heh-heh!

Gilchrist Hanh?

Jacob Lord! Lord! ye're loving folks

[GILCHRIST turns moodily about the room The eyes of JACOB follow him]

Gilchrist I got to go up the pasture a little, Jacob Wish you'd keep Rhoda company

Jacob More your hogs dead?

Gilchrist Yes, if that pleases you

Jacob Great goodness, your prize hog ain't, too?

Gilchrist [angrily] Yes, dead—[Echoing] "too"

Jacob [with a groan] Anh!

Gilchrist And "anh"

Jacob Warnings on top o' warnings

Rhoda No!

Gilchrist [snapping his fingers] Yes, yes, all the time warnings!

Jacob [studying] When'd you find him dead?

Gilchrist 'Bout half a' hour ago

Jacob [raising his eyes aloft in sanctimonious awe] Ah, Laord! And at that very minute the preacher at the church was begging God to send you another sign

[RHODA flinches and turns away]

Gilchrist Yes, oh, yes—signs

Jacob And we sent up a hundred prayers fer your soul, didn't we, Sion?

Sion [morosely] They prayed and prayed

Gilchrist Thankee

Jacob And we prayed for the whole neighborhood to be delivered from the curse of your transgression, too

Gilchrist [sitting down] No, you needn't stay, Jacob

Jacob Anh?

Gilchrist Go along now We don't need you

Jacob [offended] Well, I'll go, then, but they's others'll not go so easy If you'd 'a' heard that new preacher, 'twould 'a' melted your heart [Watching RHODA, as no one says anything] Ah, it was enough to break down a heart of stone to see the sistern and brethern weeping over yer lost estate My own eyes still burn from they tears

[GILCHRIST stares at the floor without saying anything]

And the preacher is on his way here with a committee to wrestle with yer lost souls

Gilchrist [springing up] Here!

Jacob They're coming up the road

Gilchrist Lost? We're not lost, I tell you

Jacob Well, you two don't seem saved

Rhoda [her face hardening with a sudden decisive effort] Let them come on

Show them who you are [*Fighting back her tears*] It's not right of them to worry you so They don't know you It's a sin to torment him, Jacob, and he the best man in the world [*Turning to JACOB, the tears beginning to pour down her face*] He is, he is, and you know it Look how much good he does for people [*Hotly and as if partaking of her own forced strength*] It's because he's got more sense than all of them put together and is better than they—even with their God, Jacob

[*She stares at old JACOB magnantly, and then in a moment the weak harassed look appears again in her face*]

Jacob [*stirring uneasily*] Oh, yes, good in a worldly way [*Now staring at RHODA*] But living in sin jest the same

Rhoda [*sharply*] He's my husband and I'm his wife We're not sinful Oh, we're not!

Jacob I'm jest saying what they all say I don't know

Gilchrist [*suddenly shaking himself*] Why can't I stand and answer 'em word for word, argument for argument? They can't beat me down [*Broodingly*] No, they can't

Rhoda [*turning about the room with an anguished cry*] Why don't they let us alone? Why don't they! [*She sits down helplessly again*]

Gilchrist Yes, let 'em come on and talk to me

[*MAG comes in suddenly from the rear, wearing an old cape over her head*]

Mag They's folks coming up the lane My, it's beginning to rain outside—almost a sleet

Rhoda [*shivering, and drawing a cloak up from the depths of her chair around her shoulders*] It's cold to be in October

[*GILCHRIST starts and stirs the fire rapidly again*]

Mag Want me to git dinner now?

Rhoda Yes, it's time

Mag All right'm [*She picks up a straw broom from the chimney corner and sweeps the hearth*]

Gilchrist How's Lonie today?

Mag She sets looking at the fire, Mr Hardy

Gilchrist Ah!

Mag All day long [*She sets the broom away and goes out at the rear*]

Gilchrist I'd be much obliged, Jacob, if you'd leave us now, I said

Jacob [*testily*] All right I ain't a hand to be where I ain't wanted Come on, Sion

[*SION puts away his mirror and follows*]

JACOB At the rear door JACOB turns and looks back]

They ain't nobody prayed fer ye harder'n me, Hardy

Gilchrist [*impassively*] Much obliged

Jacob And after all, I said to 'em at church, you and she's married now But, then, they's something else in their minds too, Hardy

[*JACOB and SION go out GILCHRIST stands leaning his elbow on the mantel*]

Gilchrist [*throwing out his hands suddenly*] I could stand anything, have stood it When it comes to people like them out there—good and kind and wanting to help us—then . . . well I don't know, I don't know, I tell you [*Intensely*] Why, Rhody, they're my own people, my folks They love me, and I love them We know one another We've lived our lives together in this neighborhood All the year and last year a kind of wall has been growing up between us [*Half to himself*] I got to break it down somehow

Rhoda If they loved you, would they hurt you so?

Gilchrist [*smiling and shaking his head*] You already know the answer, honey

Rhoda [*wonderingly and as if quoting*] Because they love us they hurt us? [*Running the words over*] Love and suffering—love and suffering—so we know it well

Gilchrist We're all alike down deep I used to say so Something in our heads we got, something different, God's maybe—principles we follow after—I've thought about it a heap

Rhoda [*uncertainly*] Theirs are different from ours And a great gulf as far as to the sky divides them [*More firmly*] That's the truth Oh yes, it must be

Gilchrist [*abruptly*] I don't know [*Going to the window at their right*] Old Aunt Margaret comes there tramping in the rain She nursed my mother the night I was born, and come and help lay her out when she died At every meeting year after year she's sent up a prayer for my soul She's put her own folks away in the graveyard and loves me like a son in their place And



there's old Mis' Jones and Mis' Jernigan with her They've all suffered and followed their God to the tomb And the preacher leads 'em, the preacher coming here to gather my soul into heaven And he's a good man, a thousand times better than me He'd lay down his life for me—and—I wouldn't for him I reckon I wouldn't [Turning back into the room with a despairing gesture] Ah, there you are [Going on in a moment] Who could fight against 'em when they've suffered so? Like you and me they've suffered in this world Yea, more, and I feel for 'em, and they feel for me

[Steps are heard coming up the porch at the left front A knock sounds on the door, and GILCHRIST calls]

Come in!

[AUNT MARGARET and two other old women enter at the left front, dressed in their crude Sunday clothes, their faces hid under big black flat bonnets The PREACHER, a thin middle-aged man with a pale, gentle face, follows them He is dressed in cheap baggy clothes and carries a Bible in his hands Without a word the women pass before GILCHRIST, clasp his hand a moment, and look beseechingly up into his face with eyes red from weeping Then they move on to RHODA, kiss her on the forehead, and get down on their knees in different parts of the room, bending their heads over on the seats of chairs and praying silently GILCHRIST looks about him in consternation, makes a gesture of supplication towards them, and then turns to RHODA, but she suddenly hides her face in her hands as if crushed under their gentleness He motions the PREACHER to a chair and sits down, holding his head in his hands]

Preacher [quietly] We've been moved to come to ye, Brother Gilchrist

Gilchrist I'm sorry

Preacher We've had a great outpouring of the spirit at the church today God said come [He smiles at GILCHRIST wanly]

Gilchrist [kindly] Thank you, we both thank you

Aunt Margaret [at her chair, whispering] Lord, hear our prayer

[GILCHRIST turns away at her words]

Preacher We want to read a word of Scripture and have a prayer with ye [He looks at GILCHRIST pleadingly]

Gilchrist [hesitating] Thank you—but my wife is not well

Rhoda [softly] Never mind me

[GILCHRIST nods his head in acquiescence, and the PREACHER opens his Bible]

Preacher [pulling at his collar] These are the words of God unto you, and not my words, brother Though his words be like goads to the flesh, blessed be his holy name, they are just and full of mercy [Reading] "The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath [More loudly] The Lord will destroy the house of the proud, but he will establish the border of the widow He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house, but he that hateth gifts shall live The Lord is far from the wicked, but he heareth the prayer of the righteous [His voice breaking in the room clear and bell-like] The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart, and a good report maketh the bones fat The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul, but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility"

[JACOB and SION have crept in at the rear The PREACHER closes the Bible] Let us pray

[He gets down on his knees, and JACOB does likewise SION looks on with his mouth agape, and finally he bows down RHODA and GILCHRIST sit bent over in their seats]

Gilchrist [in a low voice] Go in your room, Rhody

[She makes no reply, as the PREACHER begins to pray]

Preacher O Lord, come down now and be close to us and hear our prayer, give us strength to say the truth to this man and this woman, to get down inside them and know the roots of their very hearts

Aunt Margaret [twisting her head against her chair] O Lord, do, Lord!—adder these here many years!

Preacher Day and day out, night after night, we have called upon thee to bring these erring children, man and woman, towards thy holy throne, beseeching thee to



save these for whom our hearts do ache and bleed

*[Old JACOB and the women answer with deep groans]*

Thou sawest the tears of thy children shed for them today And we have obeyed thee, we have come to the threshold of this home to do thy will And it please thy blessed name we will go not away until thou hast sent thy blessing to this afflicted house Yea, Lord! Yea, Lord, we shall not!

*The Others Amen!*

Aunt Margaret Hardy, can't ye see how we love ye and her!

Gilchrist Rhody, don't stay in here

*Preacher [his voice gathering strength]*

And thou hast promised thy wrath to them that sit in the seat of the scornful Listen, Lord!

Margaret Do, Lord! Save my boy!

*The Others Do, Lord!*

*Preacher* Answer us, and send thy power on this man Touch him with thy finger that he may know thee as God, the very God, the ruler of the firmament, and the Great I Am For thou art all kind, and lovest all This man and woman are precious in thy sight Thou lovest them the way they would love their own sons and daughters, sons and daughters thou wouldst keep from them

Aunt Margaret *[with a low moan]* Yea, Lord

*[The two women and JACOB groan and mumble after her]*

*Preacher [beginning to beat the floor with his hands]* Thou hast sent warning and warning to him, and he heeded them not And woe, woe, woe, when thy wrath is loosed in the Judgment Day Thou gavest him a saintly wife for ten years and five, and she wrestled with his soul to bring it to the fold of thy salvation And on her dying bed she warned him, and he heeded her not *[Waiting a moment and then crying out]* Yea, he sent her to her grave

*[GILCHRIST jerks up his head]*

Yea, even so, she died so suddenly! The neighbors came and found her dead and another woman, a strange woman beside him Lord, if there's evil hid away there, make him confess and bring it to the light

Rhoda *[with a cry]* No, no, you can't believe that!

Gilchrist *[standing up]* Great goodness!

Jacob Lord, thou wilt bring all that is hid away to light

*Preacher [slashing his arms around him]* Thou canst see into his heart, whether it's all black and vile there, what thoughts he's had, what he's planned in the night, for thou seest all

Aunt Margaret *[turning, and embracing GILCHRIST's feet]* Confess it all, Hardy Clean out yer heart and save yer pore soul

*[GILCHRIST stares at her uncomprehendingly, shaking his head now and then as if trying to rid himself of some awful thought that has seized upon him]*

*Preacher* And thou hast marked it all And set a curse upon him since the day Sister Etta, a saint of God, died in this house And yet thou lovest him—we all do Thou sentest a young man, pore soul, who took his own life as a warning, and still this man heeded thee not

Gilchrist *[hoarsely]* Spare me nothing

*Preacher* He heeded thee not, and we thy children see thy wrath breaking upon him and breaking upon us *[He wrings his hands and twists about the floor, his voice rising into a croon now and then, and the tears wetting his cheeks]* The lightning came in the summer and struck his barns as a message of thy wrath His crops begun to fail him, and disease has come among his cattle and his stock Yea, crucify him, Lord, until he sees the light I would I could be crucified in his stead, but he must save himself and die unto salvation *[He hesitates a moment as if listening for a message]* Yea, thou wilt continue to persecute him, thou sendest me thy promise Stretch him on the rack, for it is the way to his salvation Already thou hast laid hand on this young wife—keep it on her—take her away to make his proud heart yield For he's a murderer, a murderer! *[His voice sharp as a knife]* And we know it, his neighbors know it!

Gilchrist Stop! Stop!

*The Women* O Lord, ha' mercy!

*Preacher* Yea, he stands condemned as a murderer, a destroyer of life So is he in the minds of his people And so will he stand until he do confess and humble himself before Almighty God As thou hast said, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me" *[In a hollow voice]* "Ye are

cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me, even me" [Shouting] And you're living in harlotry!

Gilchrist It's a lie!

Rhoda Have mercy, mercy! You're killing me!

Preacher Ye had already committed adultery in your heart

[RHODA rises from her seat, turns helplessly about, and then flees into the room at the left GILCHRIST pays no attention to her, but sits looking at the floor The women suddenly burst forth in a frenzy of lamentation and prayer "Lordy, Lord, keep thy hand on him, bow down his will—save him, Jesus, save him! Let us have the light—the light for the darkness—tear the scales from his eyes—have mercy!" The PREACHER leans his head over on the floor, shivering]

Jacob [beginning to clap his hands] Thy will, Holy Father, thy will be done [His voice choking] Save him, our Father, save Hardy Gilchrist from the burning pit!

[MAG comes in from the rear, watches a moment, wide-eyed, and then goes quickly out SION sits back on his heels, looking on, and now and then wipes the tears from his eyes with his dirty handkerchief The PREACHER on his knees feels blankly around him, touches a chair, and leans weakly against it, mopping his face with his trembling hands AUNT MARGARET breaks forth into loud cries, and rising to her feet, throws her arms ecstatically around GILCHRIST, hugging him to her breast]

Margaret Glory to God! Glory to God! Hardy, boy, can't ye confess yer sins fer me and save yourself up in heaven? Yer pore mother is up there Etta's up there watching for ye to come to God

[She falls on his neck, weeping piteously The other women come and crouch down at his feet AUNT MARGARET raises GILCHRIST's head and looks him in the face]

Look at me, Hardy, look at the tears all of us is shedding fer ye

Gilchrist [brokenly] Don't, Aunt Margaret [Catching her hands hungrily and staring at them] Poor hands that worked for me, cared for me—O God!

Margaret And they will to the end [Sob-

bing] They ain't nothing I wouldn't do for ye, boy I love ye better'n my own, that's dead and gone I'm a mother to ye

Gilchrist [convulsively] A mother to me!

Margaret [falling on her knees and laying her head in his lap] Son! My son, my boy!

[Her bonnet is pushed back, and GILCHRIST gently touches her gray wispy hair At his touch she throws her hands over her head, feverishly clasping his]

Preacher [turning, and crying out] A man who might be a prophet among us Purify him, Lord, and let him lead!

The Others Let him go before us!

Preacher And we will stand with him in that great day [Shouting] In that great day that's coming [Standing up and beginning to sing]

"There's a great day coming, a great day coming,

There's a great day coming by and by

[The women climb to their feet, singing, and clapping their hands]

"When the saints and the sinners shall be parted right and left—

Are you ready for that day to come?"

[Old JACOB rises to his feet, singing; SION clambers up after him, his fresh voice rising beautiful and clear The song mounts into a high mournful harmony as the singers draw up and encircle GILCHRIST]

"Are you ready? Are you ready?

Are you ready for that day to come?

Are you ready? Are you ready?

Are you ready for the Judgment Day?"

[GILCHRIST suddenly stands up and looms above them]

"There's a sad day coming, a sad day coming,

There's a sad day coming by and by,

When the sinner shall hear his doom,

'Depart, I know ye not!'

Are you ready for that day to come?"

Gilchrist [his face pale and drawn] Stop it Let me say something [His words piling out, low and vehement] I don't want her to know it But it's been eating in me—here [striking his breast] I been trying to get away from it I don't know what to do about it I've tried to think—tried to understand

*Preacher* Pray, pray—not think! Bless the Lord!

*Gilchrist* I know there's something wrong somewhere I don't let her know—don't let her know I hold up strong before her—I keep fighting—fighting without the light, seems like—and things keep going against me There must be a reason Why? Maybe you're right—don't try me no more, leave me to myself I got to see it for myself

[AUNT MARGARET watches him happily, her toothless jaws trembling with eagerness]

*Preacher* God alone can give life and understanding

*Gilchrist* [going on monotonously] Everything is all mixed up I keep lying awake at night—I keep trying and saying we'll make it—I got to think it out, there's a way out, and there would be a way if you'd trust in us [Half whining, as he turns upon them] You come digging in my heart, you make me say things, you cut me in here like a knife [To himself] The preacher said I killed Etta Murderer! Murderer! He says God knows all the blackness in my heart Blackness! I'm innocent Ah! [Pushing his way through them] Hardy Gilchrist never killed anybody, never hurt anybody Didn't he? There's been death all around me—Etta, Neill Something's all mixed up

[Sion continues singing, caught in the spell of the music, his face rapt and lifted towards the sky GILCHRIST suddenly throws his arms around those nearest him]

You are my own people, born with me in these fields, and I feel humbled down before you—you break my heart in two Yea, the low and the high, the strong and the weak, all are one I know nothing but that Believe in me, believe in me! [Lifting up his voice] Where is this God? [Raising his clenched fist] Show him to me, and like Jacob of old I'd wrestle with him But he won't answer me, and he won't answer you, for he don't exist There is no God

*The Others* [horrified] Listen, listen at him

*Gilchrist* Let him speak, let him speak to me, and I would answer him He knows my heart! Proud! I'm not proud!

[He drops on his knees before Sion and bends his head to the floor Sion sings on unconscious of him]

*The Others* [in a burst of fervor] Glory hallelujah! He'll see the light! God have mercy!

*Preacher* And every knee shall bow!

*Gilchrist* [standing up] Let me alone [Pushing them away] You tear me to pieces Stop!

[He turns quickly and goes out at the rear As if they would draw him back with the spell of their music, they one by one lift their illumined faces in song]

All

"Are you ready? Are you ready?"

Are you ready for the Judgment Day?"

[The music swells into a high, fervid harmony, its rhythmic beat permeating the whole house and spreading out into the fields RHODA is heard crying in the room at the left The singers turn toward the door, concentrating their singing, gradually increasing the loudness of it Presently RHODA bursts in and flings herself down in a weeping heap before them]

*Rhoda* I'm sinful! I confess and bow to God—save my husband! Save me! Hardy! O Jesus!

[AUNT MARGARET gets down with her and begins praying softly and fervently over her The others sing on with keener jubilation, their faces growing more and more set in ecstasy]

"Are you ready? Are you ready?"

Are you ready for the Judgment Day?"

[The PREACHER bends over RHODA and with shining face begins to exhort her]

*Preacher* That's right, Sister Rhoda, pray, pray Your troubles will be over soon Believe now, believe in Jesus

*Rhoda* Yes, yes, let me believe

*Aunt Margaret* [with a happy cry] She'll be saved! She'll believe! Now Hardy will follow

[She springs up and begins hopping around the room in an entranced "shout," each succeeding shriek descending weaker than the preceding one until she is finally silent Gradually the other women grow silent likewise, as if their strength were spent The PREACHER's thin, luminous face changes by degrees into the grim hardness of the fanatic as the feeling dies out of it, and he speaks gently and

*calmly to RHODA and those about him]*

*Preacher* There'll be joy in heaven over this soul, and sorrow over that other unyielding heart [*Listening*] And now God sends his message This woman must forsake him and cleave to Jesus

*The Others* Yes, Lord, yes!

*Rhoda* Mercy, mercy! Oh no!

*Preacher* When he is utterly alone, then will he realize his lost condition [*Listening*] So God says

*Aunt Margaret* [*weakly*] Lord, is that thy word?

*The Others* Yes, Lord, thou sayest so

*Rhoda* Tell me what to do to save him I'll try, I will

*Preacher* [*with cold and absolute conviction*] Flee from this house lest wrath overtake you all

[*GILCHRIST comes in, his face full of anger and grief, which he tries to control*]

*Gilchrist* What are you doing to her? Aunt Margaret! Stop, Aunt Margaret!

*Preacher* She's weeping over her sins, and will you remain lost?

*Gilchrist* [*running to RHODA and trying to lift her from the floor*] Get away! [*Thundering*] Leave my house!

*Rhoda* [*half hysterically, as she wriggles out of his arms*] I can't stand any more Take me away and give me peace I'll die here God will kill us

*Gilchrist* Rhoda!

*Rhoda* Don't touch me, Hardy Oh, it's a sin I know it is

[*GILCHRIST starts to speak, but the PREACHER interrupts him*]

*Preacher* That's it She knows now what is right Let her alone

*Gilchrist* You've frightened her to death! Let us alone [*Tortured*] Can't you let us alone!

*Preacher* Blind, blind Your sinfulness is killing her [*Firmly*] And God says she must break from this sinful wedlock

*Gilchrist* Are you fiends or people? [*Grinding his hands together helplessly*] Oh, merciful heaven!

[*The PREACHER stands unflinchingly before him, and GILCHRIST gradually bows his head*]

*Aunt Margaret* God's heart is breaking for ye—and my heart

*Gilchrist* [*his words pouring out*] What

is my sin? Tell me I'd not hurt a living soul—you know it Have I cheated or persecuted my neighbor? Have I kept my goods from the poor? I'm not guilty—I'm not I can't believe in your God All I have is my love for Rhody—my love for you and my fellowman—my own strength—the beauty and light of the world around—the pleasure and joy to be had in it Listen, Aunt Margaret Can't you understand?

*Aunt Margaret* Profess your Saviour, Son Do it for her sake and my sake.

*Gilchrist* [*throwing out his hands*] Oh, me! Have some mercy, I keep begging you, asking you to believe in me

*Preacher* And we keep begging you to believe in God, and he has laid his hand upon your wife If she don't flee from this evil house and from you, she'll be taken away.

*Gilchrist* No!

*Rhoda* I'm afraid for you, Hardy [*Running before the PREACHER and clasping her hands beseechingly*] I'm so afraid here Tell me what to do

*Preacher* Come and fast and pray God will hear your prayer and bring his soul to Jesus

[*GILCHRIST stands gazing at them stricken and speechless*]

*Rhoda* I must do something [*She turns towards HARDY, her hand fluttering and jerking with nervousness*] Say you do believe Oh, how can I leave you? Say you do!

*Gilchrist* [*his face white with pain*] My poor child! [*Going towards her*] Don't be afraid, honey Nothing will ever bother you I won't let it You must lie down now You're sick, poor child

[*JACOB raises his song again, and GILCHRIST turns on them with a shout*] You're driving me mad! [*He seizes RHODA forcibly in his arms and takes her into the room at the left Closing the door, he stands there facing them*] Now go! Go! You, Jacob

[*He starts towards old JACOB, who grabs his hat and with SION hurries out The two women, MIS' JONES and MIS' JERNIGAN, follow after, but the PREACHER and AUNT MARGARET remain*]

*Preacher* [*getting down on his knees before GILCHRIST as AUNT MARGARET does likewise*] Brother Hardy, there's no other way You've got to yield

*Gilchrist* [*with a maddened shout*]. Go

away before—before [*Half to himself*]  
What can I say? [*Vaguely*] I don't know  
what to—to . They'd not believe me  
[*Crying out to the empty air*] I'll find a  
way! I'll make 'em believe me

[*The PREACHER and AUNT MARGARET  
clasp their hands before them, looking  
silently up into his face, but he pays  
no attention to them*]

I've got to think—to see my way [*He turns  
and goes quickly out at the rear once more*]

Rhoda [*running in again*] I can't stay  
here any more It's a sin,—something tells  
me it's so And I'm afraid [*Staring at the  
door at the right rear*] She stays in there  
I hear her at night moving about, slipping  
around She gets up and opens her trunk,  
walking about in her stocking feet [*Moan-  
ing*] I try to lock her in, but she can get out  
after me I always hear her saying I'm sin-  
ful and defiled

[*Old JACOB and the two women poke  
their heads in at the rear door*]

Aunt Margaret Poor baby! Don't worry  
now

Preacher Peace will come to you Come  
over to Aunt Margaret's house We'll com-  
fort you

Rhoda [*holding to AUNT MARGARET*] And  
I've heard her at night playing the organ  
and singing Mag heard her once [*Blankly*]  
Where's Hardy?

Jacob He's gone cross't the fields

Aunt Margaret [*getting a cloak and put-  
ting it around RHODA's shoulders*] Come on,  
child No, no, child Don't be afraid

[*MAG enters at the rear*]

Mag Mr Hardy said for me to stay with  
you, Miss Rhody

Aunt Margaret She's going to my house  
a while, Mag

Mag She can't—she's—

Rhoda [*her eyes closed, her body sway-  
ing with weakness*] I've got to go Don't  
bother me

[*AUNT MARGARET and the PREACHER lead  
her out like one half asleep MAG  
stares after them*]

## ACT FOUR

### SCENE TWO

*The GILCHRIST sitting-room, before dawn  
the next morning A fire is blazing in the  
fireplace, and outside the wind and rain*

*drive through the trees and against the  
house in great groaning gusts MAG is squat-  
ting before the bed of coals, heating a pot  
of coffee A sudden burst of raindrops hit  
on the roof like a rattle of gravel thrown,  
and the wind swirls the flame around in the  
fireplace*

Mag [*fearfully*] Ugh! Listen to that rain  
washing away the world!

[*She looks around her and crouches  
over the fire Presently a step sounds  
on the rear porch, and GILCHRIST en-  
ters He is hatless and wet to the skin,  
his unshaven face haggard and drawn  
MAG springs up with a cry of joy*]

Mr Hardy!

Gilchrist [*mumbling*] Where is Etta?

Mag What is it, Mr Hardy?

Gilchrist [*starting, and gazing at her*]  
Tchkl!

Mag [*running to him and catching him  
by the arm*] Come to the fire and warm  
your poor self, you're drenched

Gilchrist [*allowing her to lead him to the  
fire*] Is Rhoda asleep? [*He looks at the  
door to the left*]

Mag [*quickly, as she gets between him  
and the door*] She's all right She's sleep-  
ing sound Don't bother her

Gilchrist No, no, I won't—poor child  
[*He sits down and stares at the fire*]

Mag Where you been all this terrible  
night?

Gilchrist Walking—walking, and hunting  
—hunting

Mag Here's some coffee, it'll warm you

Gilchrist [*pushing the cup away*] For  
peace! peace! [*Half to himself*] Why won't  
they let people people [*Shaking  
his head*] They can't help it They can't—  
yes, they can

Mag Don't worry, Mr Hardy. Please  
drink it

Gilchrist They've poisoned her mind,  
Mag, filled her head with a feeling of guilt  
I can't see my way . I've got to show  
her differently somehow . . . Pshaw! I said,  
"Where's Etta?"

Mag Everything will be all right The  
sun will soon be up and the weather clear  
off

Gilchrist Oh yes, I know—but . yeh,  
sorrow and tears seem our lot [*Raising  
his head*] Something beating and hammer-  
ing in my brain, beating like a sledge ham-

mer on the anvil Did you ever hear a voice, Mag, talking to you like it was a thousand miles away from you?

Mag You're sick, and no wonder, off in such a rain

Gilchrist Sick sick . they ain't any doctors to cure us Physician, heal thyself Yes, that's right [*Looking at his hands*] And they say there's blood on my hands and hers My own people say it Blood must pay for blood

Mag [*taking his arm*] Rest yourself, Mr Hardy

Gilchrist I can't rest [*Staring at her with burning eyes*] Do you know what it is to love somebody better than heaven and earth? [*Touching her bowed head*] Poor, poor Mag That's how I love her and her me, and I love my people, Mag, and they hate me [*His voice hoarse with pain and feeling*] This religion—it baffles me, there's something there they've got that's too—too strong It does something to folks [*Thinking*] But what would they do without it? They must have something to believe in—[*gesturing*] out there! [*Excitedly, crying out*] I'm innocent, she's innocent as an angel, I tell you If only Aunt Margaret would believe in us—trust me—the others would follow her What can I say to her—to reach her? Ah! And I won't give in, I won't [*His voice falling to a murmur*] But they all think they're doing right, and I know I'm right Will they cut off our lives so? [*He sits clasping his face between his hands and staring at the flames*] What time is it?

Mag 'Bout five o'clock Soon be day-break

Gilchrist Weak weak Etta said so She always spoke about an everlasting arm around her—something that held her up, gave her strength And I've got nothing, nothing but my own mind to depend on and give me light And all is dark now

Mag [*turning away her head*] Oh—now you'll drink your coffee, won't you?

Gilchrist That's a good fire there Dry oak wood burns fine, a red flame in front and a blue one behind—hot as hell, yes, the preacher would say so, and red as blood

There's plenty of wood under the shelter to last you till spring, ain't there [*Bending over*] Hah, look at that knife blade—like a long red finger—pointing

Mag Yes, yes, but that don't matter

Gilchrist A good farmer is always prepared for anything that happens—a woodpile full of wood for bad weather and plenty of corn for his stock, ain't he?

Mag Yes, he is, Mr Hardy, and you do

Gilchrist Is he? Hanh, no man knows what's liable to come upon him, no man knows what a fix his mind can get in, does he?

Mag Maybe not; we can't know everything

Gilchrist [*starting up and pacing the floor again*] Nobody knows what's going to happen, nobody but their God, they say, and he won't tell any man I come by the barn there, and the horse we drove to be married stuck his nose out of the stall and whickered at me and rubbed my shoulder And her cow was breathing soft and the pigs grunting and rubbing by the well-post [*Shivering*] It was all so plain in my mind like I'd heard it all my life I could hear every sound that's ever been made on this farm, and it seemed I'd die if I didn't get my peace back and make them understand me and believe in me

Mag You wait here, Mr Hardy, and I'll fix you some good breakfast

Gilchrist The truth, the truth! That preacher, Mag, he spoke of her hair, her eyes, her breast, and said—said it was a harlot sucking my soul out of me O God! And she is a spring of life to me Like a man perishing in a desert I was until she came to me

Mag Yes, yes, Mr Hardy

[*She picks up the lamp and sits down holding it in her hand GILCHRIST continues pacing the floor, thinking Presently he begins talking to himself*]

Gilchrist Remember when my grandmother died it was a cold winter day, and I was a little boy no higher'n this chair I was out in the yard playing marbles, and before she died I heard a sweet cheeping sound, and I looked up, and a little bird as white as snow was setting on the comb of the house

[*MAG continues looking before her without a word*]

And it was singing so pitiful-like it made me want to cry I run in the house to tell Mother, and they were sitting around still as death, and Grandmuh was stretched out long and stiff under a sheet There come a whirring sound in the room. and that little



bird went flying around and around over the bed, cheeping like its heart was broke Then it flew out of the door and across the field At the burying that day, after they put flowers on the grave, it come out of the woods and perched itself on the headboard, singing its song When they weren't nobody looking, I took my bean-shooter and shot at it and scared it away They said after it was Grandmuh's soul But I didn't believe it I don't still

Mag [*softly, as if to a child*] Yes

Gilchrist They talked about it, made a picture out of it, a sign in which to believe Yes, and that's what they all say—signs—signs with a meaning to poor man Like the children in the wilderness—a fire by night, a cloud by day—or a rainbow—or a sight, a sound, always a meaning in it Yes, I've piled up the goods of this world, and they say God's sent a curse on me for my proudness and for my sins, that he stays hid away behind the sky, watching me standing up in the morning of my life and tasting the joys of sin It's not sin, it's joys of life I've tasted And they hear him say, "I am the great I Am, and there's none beside me, and I'll put forth my power and destroy him and send fire from heaven to fall upon him and a drought to come in summer and parch up his crops and cholera to kill off his hogs and the whole neighborhood be cursed because of him" Ah! And all the time it was nothing but things happening the way they happen—a cause for it—a cause the same as if I don't eat, I go hungry, or if I put my hand in the fire, I burn it [*Listening*] I hear that plank banging at the barn It ought to be nailed [*Shaking his head*] There's so much to do Oh, they've taken the pleasure out of my life, Mag [*Listening again, as the wind rattles the windows in their sockets*] And the wind—listen—same as if it was trying to get at me, too Will the whole world turn against us—take me and her and wipe us out—sweep us away like dust in the wind? [*Seizing the Bible and turning the leaves*] "God shall likewise destroy thee forever He shall take thee away and pluck thee out of thy dwelling-place and root thee out of the land of the living" Some man wrote that and believed it It's a story told [*Reading*] "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength" . [*Crying out*] Let life be

my strength, keep my mind from death! Yes, yes, I've felt like taking my razor and cutting my own throat, and I started to do it And why didn't I? Because of Rhoda? That, too But mainly because I know that this life is all we have, like all animals under the sun When we lose that, we lose all, and are nothing—gone—forever and ever [*Thinking*] Ah, Neill! Neill!

Mag [*watching him*] Now I'll get you some victuals [*She goes out at the rear*]

Gilchrist [*turning through the leaves*] And Job was persecuted and bowed himself to God [*Reading*] "Then Job answered the Lord and said, Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth Then answered the Lord unto

Job out of the thunder and said" the whirlwind the whirlwind "Hast thou an arm like God? Or canst thou thunder with a voice like him? Deck thyself now with majesty and excellence, and array thyself with glory and beauty And Job said, Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes" [*Crying out again as he paces the room*] For what? For what? He was a righteous man He did no evil [*Closing the Bible*]

Signs and meanings of some Almighty power that has care for man—and hate for man I'll never see it that way Aunt Margaret knows my heart I'm not guilty of all these things It's an open book to her They all know me [*He stops and stares at the bureau Slowly he starts to open the drawer and then jerks his hand away and turns back with a cry against RHODA's door*] No, no! [*Shaking himself*] Fool! [*Clasping his head in his hands*] I must be going crazy Now now I must see see [*Pacing the floor again and thinking*] Oh, we are blind and scared like chickens before the hawk Mag! Wrong, wrong! Why should man be afraid of that which is right and got pleasure in it—make him a bed of nails to sleep upon? [*Now carrying on again the long puzzling within himself*] But—but [*Thinking*] A sparrow sets on the ditchbank, singing his song, and a snake raises his head and swallows him With my briar hook I come along and kill that snake, and then—and then—something maybe is lying in wait for me same as if I was a snake Yes, that's what poor Neill called me—a snake in the grass . [*Shaking his head*] But that's not it—why don't

that plank quit banging?—not it I  
 die man dies—it's not God that kills  
 us, no more than he kills the corn that grows  
 ripe It's—it's— [*He stammers and hesi-  
 tates and then goes on driving his thoughts  
 forward*] the way things go Plants, ani-  
 mals, man—all pass their way, they live,  
 they die They have their season [*Stopping  
 again*] The corn ripens . yes comes  
 to its fulfillment, so man . [*His voice  
 running faster*] grows up, lives, ripens in his  
 days and dies He's finished, he's done  
 completed dead to rot like a leaf under  
 the ground [*Crying out*] That's the truth,  
 Rhody! Man is like a flower, like a breath,  
 and is gone, and that which goes on for-  
 ever and ever that remaineth like the  
 hills from generation to generation—it  
 means that in the Book It's that—it ain't  
 God—it's something, something that pays  
 no attention to man it goes on and  
 on and on it's life and death and death  
 and life And they're afraid and think  
 about it, dream about it, and make pic-  
 tures of it, think it's somebody, because  
 they don't know [*His breath going out of  
 him in a long tired sigh*] Who does know?  
 [*He stops before RHODA's door and hesi-  
 tates as if about to go in*] Who does know?  
 Nobody but man can know man  
 [*Louder*] Man! Me That's the truth [*Mur-  
 muring*] And the truth shall set you free  
 man he has his life [*Throwing out  
 his hands*] Enjoy it, live it [*More and  
 more certainty coming into his voice*] Live  
 it to the end and go to his long rest  
 [*Dropping down into his chair*] Rest  
 rest [*Starting up again*] Endure the  
 sorrow, the pain, take it to his breast  
 and live live on . . on accepting  
 it knowing that's part of it all  
 above it keeping his joy and feeling it good  
 good

[*The door at the rear opens, and  
 RHODA stands on the threshold, tot-  
 tering with weakness AUNT MARGARET  
 is behind her GILCHRIST looks up at  
 her blankly RHODA hesitates a mo-  
 ment and then comes forward to him  
 and puts her arms around his neck*]  
 Gilchrist Rhody!

Rhoda [*her words tired and low*] I don't  
 care what happens to me—my soul, my  
 life, let them have it I can't leave you  
 Hold me tight in your arms and never let  
 them get me away any more

Gilchrist [*kissing her, half perplexed*] No,  
 you'll never leave me any more, nor me  
 you!

Aunt Margaret [*dropping down at his  
 feet*] We took her away over to my house  
 last night Forgive me, Hardy Now I've  
 brought her back to you.

Gilchrist What!

Aunt Margaret Say you forgive your  
 Aunt Margaret

Rhoda [*weakly and as if a mystic and  
 restless dreaminess were over her*] Sin . . .  
 guilt I don't care I am yours forever  
 and ever All the night all the night  
 . [*Leaning heavily against him*] Why  
 didn't you come for me?

Gilchrist Oh, Aunt Margaret!

Aunt Margaret I don't understand it no  
 more I believe in my Lord and I believe in  
 you and in her, Hardy I love you both so  
 [*Twisting her hands together*] All night I  
 prayed and talked to her, and seeing her  
 wringing her hands and crying! [*Weeping*]  
 I don't understand it, but keep her with  
 you—always [*Sobbing*] We're wrong to  
 take her away Something speaks in my  
 heart and tells me so And I've told her so  
 Keep her

Gilchrist Rhody! [*Pulling AUNT MAR-  
 GARET up to him, by RHODA*] And you, too  
 [*Eagerly, his voice broken*] Trust in us, be-  
 lieve in us? Say you do now—this minute

Aunt Margaret I know you're good I  
 know it I can't understand it, but my  
 heart tells me so My boy! I love you both  
 too much—I can't hold out against it I  
 love you so My love .

Gilchrist [*half-wonderingly*] Love

[*AUNT MARGARET goes out, weeping*]

Rhoda Let them kill me I'll love you  
 still

Gilchrist And I you too They can't kill  
 that

Rhoda Yes, yes [*Murmuring and as if  
 her whole being were sliding away into an  
 oblivion of rest*] And I'll not be barren  
 like her Aunt Margaret knows

Gilchrist [*clasping her to him*] Rhody!  
 [*His voice rising fresher*] . And we'll  
 go in the church and call our people and  
 tell them the way of our love of our  
 God [*Stammering*] The God in us the  
 light the one and only God [*Eagerly*]  
 That's the truth There's no other anywhere.



*[He kisses RHODA's hair, his face touched again with a mixture of grief and happiness]*

*Rhoda [her face shining through the tears] Yes*

*Gilchrist [brokenly] Aunt Margaret believes us, and they will too At last they will And we'll go on somehow we'll go on [Sitting down and clasping her tight*

*in his arms, his eyes staring off as he murmurs over her] And worry no more Rest, rest, child And everything will be warm and quiet and—it will be peaceful again and*

*[His voice dies away, and MAG comes to the door at the rear with a tray]*

THE END

# ROADSIDE

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

By LYNN RIGGS

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## LYNN RIGGS AND THE FOLK PLAY

LYNN RIGGS, poet, playwright, and scenarist, was born on a farm near Claremore, Oklahoma, in 1899. Like many writers, his heritage and early experience were non-literary, but provided him with much of his future subject matter. Oil had not yet been discovered and the territory was witnessing the conflict between the cattleman and the farmer which is the theme of Mr Riggs' early plays. As a boy he worked on his father's farm and, in the evenings, attended "play parties" where he delighted in the rich, poetic speech of his neighbors. He took pleasure, too, in their folk songs and ballads, characterized, as he says, by "their quaintness, their sadness, their robustness, their simplicity, their hearty or bawdy humors, their sentimentalities, their melodrama, their touching sweetness." Further solace came to him in the shape of "trashy fiction," and echoes of sensational and tawdry novels of violence are to be found in his work, along with stronger echoes of the folk.

After a roving youth, which included singing at the local movie, punching cows on a cattle train, clerking in a bookstore, and performing as a Hollywood extra, Mr Riggs returned to Oklahoma and became a reporter on the *Tulsa Oil and Gas Journal*, the very title of which signals the vast change which had come over his native state. As an antidote to journalism he began writing verse, a slender volume of which was published as *The Iron Dish* (1930). He entered the University of Oklahoma, where he was encouraged to turn his talents to the stage. Here his first play, *Cuckoo*, a farce, was produced by the drama department, and he knew his vocation. A summer season as a Chautauqua entertainer gained him enough money to join the artists' colony at Santa Fe, and here he began work in earnest.

His first serious play, the one-act *Knives from Syria* establishes the theme and characteristics of his early and best work. He tells, in Oklahoma dialect, the brief story (reminiscent of Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen*) of a young, romantic girl swept off her feet by the influence of a Syrian peddler whose shabby reality is masqued from her eyes by the atmosphere of mystery and far-off places that surrounds him. The romantic young lady is the chief character of both *Roadside* and *Green Grow the Lilacs*, in which a peddler also figures. In *Roadside*, his place has been taken by the young braggart from Texas.

Eventually, Mr Riggs completed a full-length tragedy, *Big Lake*, produced in New York by the American Laboratory Theater, one of the fine experimental dramatic groups, in 1928. The play attracted considerable attention and won for its author a Guggenheim fellowship. He went to France, wrote the whole of *Green Grow the Lilacs*, and began *Roadside*. The latter was finished in this country at the encouragement of the producer, Arthur Hopkins, while Mr Riggs was serving an apprenticeship, as a script writer in Hollywood.

Both plays grow out of his childhood background in Indian Territory, both are part of the widespread and healthy movement of the American theater in the thirties to explore the roots of the past and the possibilities of folk drama. Where such a man as Paul Green searches the tragic nature of the negro folk, however, Lynn Riggs turns to the virile spirit of the happy-go-lucky cowpoke. If Paul Green draws inspiration and tone from the pathos of the spiritual, Lynn Riggs seems to convey the cocksureness, the braggadocio and waggery of the rodeo singer. Thematically, his work may be associated with the tall tales of the frontier, with Davy Crockett and the early works of Mark Twain.

Structurally *Roadside* has an interesting originality. Working with ballad material, the playwright has given it many of the characteristics of that unsophisticated form. Like the ballad, *Roadside* is casual about exposition, about the logic of events, or about the unities. Instead, the playwright, like the ballad singer, chooses to talk most about the parts of the story that interest him—the gusty comedy of the courtroom scene, for instance, for which the well-made play could ill spare the time. The purpose of the ballad singer is never simply to tell a story—the plot is generally familiar in advance—but to convey the emotions of a situation (recall Johnny Armstrong at the moment of his betrayal, Sir Patrick Spens and his loyalty, Edward's bitter forgiveness) to his hearers. So one might say the playwright is here interested not in the horizontal progress of his story—it is

evident from the start that Hannie and Texas are destined for each other—but in the vertical depth of his scenes. The realistic playwright could find no place for Texas' narrative of his birth in the first act. For Mr Riggs, as for the ballad singer, the chapter of autobiography justifies its place by the pleasure it gives, as does the fooling of Red Ike and Black Ike. The structure of *Roadside* grows out of its material, it is lanky, casual, and rich in speech and feeling, like its characters. Like them it is earthy, and elemental, and its humor not infrequently springs from subjects which the more sophisticated either have exhausted or choose to treat ambiguously. It is a complete expression of Mr Riggs' creed, that you are of the soil which nourished you, and its virtues are your virtues. And its theme, the conflict between the farmer and the cow hand, the settler and the vagabond, organized society and the individual, is part of "the life of poetry" in which everyman can see himself.

Mr Riggs has written other plays, most notably *Russet Mantle* in 1936 and *The Cream in the Well*, 1941, but his attempts to free himself from folk material, and possibly his continuing work as a Hollywood scenarist, have led to a loss of the vitality and the freshness, and the genuine poetry of his early plays. *Green Grow the Lilacs* was made into the sensationally successful musical comedy *Oklahoma!* by Rogers and Hammerstein in 1943.

*Roadside* was produced in New York by Arthur Hopkins in 1930. Ralph Bellamy played the role of Texas, Ruthelma Stevens, Hannie, and Frederick Burton, Pap Rader.

## CHARACTERS

PAP RADER  
BUZZEY HALE  
HANNIE RADER  
RED IKE  
BLACK IKE  
TEXAS  
TOWN MARSHAL  
NEB  
JUDGE SNODGRASS  
MRS FOSTER

ACT I—*By the side of a road through the woods in Indian Territory*  
*Sunset of a June day in 1905*

ACT II—SCENE 1 *The same Dawn, the next morning*

SCENE 2 *A courtroom in Verdigris Switch Two hours later*

ACT III—*The roadside again An hour or so later*

## ROADSIDE

### ACT ONE

*By the side of a road through the woods in Indian Territory, the year 1905 The back end of a covered wagon, with boxes for stepping down out of it, can be seen at left The road, coming in at the back from deep in the woods, has been wdened here by hundreds of campers, charred logs, ashes, last year's leaves,—litter the roadside A large, black, three-legged pot, with a fire under it, stands at the right Some old camp chairs, a battered stool or two, dishes, tin pans, etc It is near sundown of a day in June, and the air is summery and sweet*

*Buzzey HALE, a little, bluish, dried-up farmer, is sitting disconsolately by the fire PAP RADER, a tall, wiry, good-natured old man, with dirty, falling-apart clothes, comes from around the wagon*

*Pap [snorting] Set there a-pinn' Damned if you doan look like a ole turkey buzzard! No wonder Hannie called you Buzzey*

*Buzzey [shortly] That ain't it Buzzey is short—fer beautiful*

*Pap Beautiful! Hunh! If you're beautiful, I'm a bob-tailed witch! Looky here, I doan see whut you make outa follerin' us around anyway, Mister Turkey Buzzard They ain't nuthin' dead around here fer you to chaw on Clappin' yer wings! And damned if that sorry face of yourn ain't blue, too, same as a buzzard! After you've et, things must be a sight I ain't wantin' you around*

*Buzzey I'm gonna be around, though*

*Pap Yeow, you'll be*

*Buzzey [with asperity] If it hadn't a-been fer you, Hannie wouldn't a-left me in the first place You done it with yer damned ole covered wagon Tellin' her about the roads again Remindin' her of when she was a girl ridin' hell-bent from Arkansas to Panhandle alongside you an' yer ole womern You brung her up, I'll say you brung her up, with her ways! Wonder I ever married her a-tall an' her with a ole man like you couldn't read a sign*

*on a hitch-post Whut'd you think about? Radin' on the road, that's all you think about From here to Texas, and back to Wyoming and all over the cattle roads, and litle shike-poke<sup>1</sup> towns from here to Missouri Stealin' chickens and roas'n'ears and sich, to keep you alive [In disgust] The road! That's all you think about!*

*Pap Whut you think about is plowin'*

*Buzzey Yeow, and makin' hay and plantin' corn and oats and feedin' cattle and shoats—livin' outa the ground, is whut I think about I'd like to know whut's better?*

*Pap This here's better An' I'm tellin' you Hannie'd orter divorced you like she did You ain't no kind of a man, and yore life ain't no kind of a life fer Hannie to be havin' She's a strappin' girl that wants to roam, like me, and see life 'stid of a milk churn.*

*Buzzey I'll git her back, you'll see If I have to foller you up Salt Crick*

*Pap [chuckling] If you foller us too long, yer crops'll all be runt Here it is June an' I'll bet yer hay ain't even first cut*

*Buzzey It's cut, Pap Rader I got money to h'ar me h'ard hands*

*Pap And while you ain't there how hard you reckon they work? [Chortling] I used to be a h'ard hand myself. When ole man Hardgraves was away we'd set down and not git up till his buggy wheels rattled the pike comin' home from Joplin*

*Buzzey When I h'ar men, I h'ar men Red Ike and Black Ike Brazier—that's the kinda men I h'ar I've knowed 'em from boys up Ever since Hannie married me, Red Ike and Black Ike has worked on my farm same as if it uz them, and ud git the last drap of growin' out of it*

*Pap Well, I hope yer right 'Cause if you ain't, you'll git sick and turn bluer'n you be a'ready*

*Buzzey I'm right, Pap Rader*

*Pap Ain't nobody right fer too long at a time, I noticed*

<sup>1</sup> A mythical bird whose activities are embarrassing to everyone

*Hannie's Voice [from inside the wagon]*  
Pap!

*Pap* Whut is it?

*Hannie [excitedly]* Pap, come 'ere!

*Pap* Come 'ere, yerself I'm busy [*To Buzzey*] If you doan git sense enough to stop follern' us from county to county the way you been doin' fer a week, you'll sleep here on the cold ground till you die of the shakin' aygers

*Hannie [from the wagon]* God damn it, Pap! You heared me, you tarnation ole fool! Come a-runnin'! Can't you hear nuthin'?

*Pap* Well, whut is it? Come out here and tell it

*Hannie [sticking her head out]* I ain't got so many clothes on And I don't expect to come out and give that ole buzzard no free show He's crazy enough fer a womern 'thout seem' one naked Case you'd like to know it, that hound of yourn is eatin' up yer hog shoulder

*Pap [flying around the wagon and out of sight]* Well, why in blazes didden you say so!

*Hannie* I said so

*[She withdraws her head A hound lets out a dismal wail and a series of short yelps]*

*Buzzey [going up to the wagon]* Whur'd yer Pap git a hog shoulder, Hannie? Guess he bought it—

*Hannie [putting her head out again]* Bought it, huh? Stole it offen the slaughter house at Claremore

*Buzzey* I knowed it

*Hannie* You're so smart

*[She withdraws]*

*Pap [coming around the wagon]* I saved that dog from drownin' and this is the way he does me A good hog shoulder plumb runt [*He holds up a mutilated hog shoulder*] Here, might as well have it all now you've runt it, you yeller cur [*He throws the shoulder back to the dog*] I'm goin' down along the crick bank and see whut I c'n see

*Buzzey [nastily]* Watermelons ain't ripe yit, Pap

*Pap* Who said watermelons?

*Buzzey* Roas'n'ears'll be ripe in July, though

*Pap.* I'm gonna git a mite of hay fer the horses Stir that stew if you're gonna stick around here You'll be wantin' some in yer

measly gullet afore long [*He starts out Turning back*] Looky here, you let Hannie alone She ain't gonna marry you again And she ain't gonna have no truck with you's long's I'm around, you hear me?

*Buzzey.* I hear you

*Pap* You better heed me

*[He goes out]*

*[BUZZEY stirs the stew, tastes it, and is about to pour some in a bowl when he hears singing down the road He puts the bowl down hastily, wrinkles his forehead, trying to make out something HANNIE comes out of the wagon and down the steps She is a buxom, well-made girl about twenty, with black snapping eyes and a rich, vulgar, earthy humor. She crosses over past the fire]*

*Buzzey* Hannie [*She stops*] Hannie, you ain't runnin' away from me, air you?

*Hannie* I doan know you from Adam

*Buzzey* Don't you do me this a-way, Hannie

*Hannie* What a-way?

*Buzzey* Not havin' no words with me, even

*Hannie* Why're you follern' us all the way from Vinita, me and Pap?

*Buzzey* I can't he'p it Can't you come back to me?

*Hannie* Not to you ner no one like you I want me a man, not a broomstick Besides, I had enough of bein' a farmer's wife

*Buzzey* It was 'cause you'd been s' sharp to me, I done whut I done You wouldn't a-got no divorce from me if someone hadden fixed it up fer me to be found the way I was

*Hannie* Oh, woudden I? Sich a womern the Ikes found you with, too! From all account You musta been in a bad way. Who fixed it then?

*Buzzey* I ain't sayn'.

*Hannie* Well, whoever fixed it, you fixed yourself with me

*Buzzey* Hannie, it won't never happen again

*Hannie* It can happen till you're blue in the face, fer all I keer Whut I can't figger out is how I ever come to marry you in the first place

*Buzzey* It was love, that's whut it was

*Hannie* Love? Lemme look at you

*Buzzey* Well, look at me, and you'll see

*Hannie [looking him over]* Is that a new suit you got on?

*Buzzey* Brand spankin'!

*Hannie* It don't seem to improve you none Well, now le's see You shore I was married to you?

*Buzzey* You know blame well you was!

*Hannie* I reckon you're right All I c'n recollect was once about two year ago it was Spring, and Pap and me stopped by that little branch that run th'ough yore cow pasture And you come down to set the dogs on us When you seen me—you didn't So I fell in a daze er sump'n—and when I come to, it seemed like I was kinda married to you— All on account of it bein' Spring, and you not settin' the dogs on us—and one other thing I was all set to marry *someone* along about then—and I never thought to be picky and choosy

*Buzzey [huffily]* You coulda done worse I had me plenty of land and a way to take keer of you, didn't I?

*Hannie* Yeah But that don't mean a thing to me I could take keer of myself the day I was borned Yep, I believe I could! Anyway, I can now And if I ever marry again, it'll have to be to a world-singin', star-traipsin' son of a gun that's more my match than you air And when I do run onto sich a feller, I miss my guess if cracks of lightnin' don't burn up the country fer fourteen miles around So look out you don't git scorched

*[She starts out]*

*Buzzey* Hannie, come on back! The—the ca'ves even doan know me And old Roan licks at me ever time I go in the barn They won't have nuthin' to do with me They're missin' you, I reckon

*Hannie* Well, I been missed by ca'ves and horses afore But I never hearded of no dumb animals dyn' of a broke heart Quit a-botherin' me now

*Buzzey* Aw, Hannie, lemme go with you Air you goin' to pick up sticks?

*Hannie* No, I ain't

*Buzzey* Er find wild ingerns? I'll help you do whutever you're a-goin' fer Guess I'll foller you

*Hannie* Guess you won't, Mister Buzzey Hale *[Roguishly]* I ain't gonna do nuthin' you c'n he'p me do

*[She goes out]*

*[The song down the road comes nearer  
Buzzey listens, uncertain and worried]*

Then he straightens up decisively and is a rod of hot anger, when RED IKE and BLACK IKE BRAZIER burst into sight through the trees along the road They have on straw hats, overalls, dirty blue shirts, heavy brogans, and are leaning on each other's shoulders, singing loudly "They chew tobaccer thin in Kansas!" BLACK IKE's hair is coal black, RED's a flaming red They are stupid and elfin at the same time Seeing BUZZEY, they stop short, and make a sudden instinctive move to run away, which they quickly suppress]

*Buzzey* Well, by God, it's you, is it!

*Red Ike [swallowing hard]* Yeow, it's us  
*Black Ike* Red Ike and Black Ike—both of us

*[They begin singing again, and sing right through BUZZEY's angry speech]*

*The Ikes [singing]*

They chew tobaccer thin in Kansas,  
They chew tobaccer thin in Kansas,  
They chew tobaccer thin and they spit it on their chin,  
And they lick it in again in Kansas

The people don't wed in Kansas,  
The people don't wed in Kansas,  
The people don't wed—er so I've heard it said,

They jist go to bed in Kansas

They cook in a pot in Kansas,  
They cook in a pot in Kansas,  
They cook in a pot, and they eat it while it's hot,  
And they git the Guess What in Kansas

*Buzzey [furiously]* Red Ike and Black Ike, hell! Of all the sorry, mangy— Whut in hell're you doin' here anyhow? Whut'd you mean flyin' off leavin' my farm to run itself? How long you been gone? You're two days away now! I'll bet the hogs've died fer slop! I'll bet the hay's burnt up in the field! I'll bet the corn's jist bakin' in the row—

*Red Ike* Is this yore campin' outfit?

*Buzzey [outraged]* Campin'!

*Black Ike* You a campin' man now, Mr Hale? We didden know whur you'd went at

*Red Ike* You got some soup?

*Buzzey* Soup!



*Black Ike* We're powerful hongry Ain't et in a day

*Red Ike* Been a-singin' to keep up our sperrits

*Buzzey* Singin'!

*Black Ike* Et some strawberries, though

*Buzzey* [*violently*] I don't keer if you starve! Whut'd you leave my farm fur! Thought I could trust it to you

*Black Ike* Mister Hale, we never thunk to a-run onto you, I swear to my time We didden know whur you was, not showin' up Thought mebbe you drowned in the bottom some'ers

*Red Ike* We was a-lookin' fer someone else

*Black Ike* Is this the—? [*He is looking over past the wagon*] By gum it is!

*Red Ike* It's the wagon!

*Buzzey* You git back quick's you c'n hotfoot it, both of you I'd orter thrash you 'thin a inch of yer lives! Git, I tell you!

*Red Ike* We're gonna stay.

[*He sits down, cross-legged*]

*Black Ike* [*following suit*] We're gonna set here and stay, ain't we, Red?

*Buzzey* You're f'ard, both of you!

*Red Ike* Suits me Can't make me mad

*Buzzey* I'd orter f'ar you

*Black Ike* We're a 'ready done f'ard

*Buzzey* No, you ain't! You agreed to he'p me git the hay in and stay th'ough the thrashin'

*Red Ike* We'll he'p you.

*Buzzey* [*helplessly*] Well, don't set there Git back like I told you

*Red Ike* We jst come

*Buzzey* Look here I'd orten't to do this—you're both so onnery—but I'll give you five dollars

*Red Ike* Le's see it

[*Buzzey hands him a bill*]

*Black Ike.* Le's see another'n

[*Buzzey hands over another*]

[*Red Ike and Black Ike look at each other, then hand the bills back*]

*Red Ike* Don't hurry us

*Buzzey* You better take it Why, you're damn fools! It'll buy you near ten plugs of Horseshoe

*Black Ike* [*spitting*] 'Druther chew Star Navy

*Buzzey* Well, Star Navy

*Black Ike* [*irrelevantly*] Chew Star Navy and spit ham gravy

*Buzzey* Look here, if I give you ten dollars apiece—no, I won't give you ten dollars

*Red Ike* Woulden take it.

*Buzzey* [*suspiciously*] How much you tryin' to bleed outa me?

*Red Ike* Not any

*Buzzey* Whut'd you come fer, anyway?

*Red Ike* [*evasively*] Oh,—jst seen the purty road and started off a-follerin' it

*Black Ike* You can't keep no colt in the pasture when it's Summer We was puttin' up the mules and I says to Red, "Red," I says, "How about it?" And Red says, "How about it yerself?" So up we got and away we went till we come to Verdigrée Switch There, they was a great to-do of a man shootin' his way into jail, so we hurry up and here we be

*Buzzey* You got sump'n up yer sleeve

*Red Ike* Why, Mr Hale, no No, we ain't! Mebbe you're right, though Mebbe we have got sump'n up our sleeves [*Breaking off, excitedly*] Oh!

[*He scrambles to his feet*]

*Black Ike* [*doing likewise*] It's her!

*Red Ike* She's a-comin'!

*Black Ike* She's here!

*Hanne* [*coming in, ecstatically*] Hello! Howdy! Red Ike and Black Ike! Thought I heared yer voices!

*Red Ike* Thought we'd find you!—

*Black Ike* Knowed we'd find you!—

*Red Ike* —'f we looked long enough—

*Black Ike* —'n in the right place—

*Red Ike* —'n on the right road

*Hanne* If I ain't missed you!—

*Red Ike* We missed you Whutta you mean runnin' off?—

*Black Ike* Flyin' the coop, kickin' over the trace chains? Come on back, what you say?

*Red Ike* 'Spect us to work 'thout you around?

*Black Ike* Marry the ole buzzard again

*Red Ike* Put up with him

*Hanne* Quit it! I'm s' glad to see you, I'll be promisin' to, in a minute!

*Buzzey* Hanne! Go on, promise! I'll be good to you if you come back—and marry me again Git you a carpet sweeper

*Black Ike* Go on, promise! Think of me and Red Not hardly able to do no work 'thout you around

*Red Ike* Think of me and Black In the field honin' fer you

*Buzzey* Think of *me*, why don't you, Hannie?

*Hannie* Now, now! Quit it! I'm gonna think of myself a while Here, set down and eat some stew

*Buzzey* [hopefully] You ain't said you wouldn't come back

*Hannie* And I ain't said I would

[*She gives them all stew They sit down and eat*]

*Black Ike* We're shore hongry

*Red Ike* Ain't et in a day

*Hannie* [happily] 'S jist like ole times Me and Buzzey and you Ikes settin' around If I ain't missed you! You Ikes is purt' near as crazy as me Well, not quite, but purt' near Whut you have to do 'th a farm is sump'n I can't make out, though

*Red Ike* If you like it, we like it Ain't that so, Black?

[*BLACK nods agreement*]

*Hannie* I did like yer ole farm some, Buzzey—

*Buzzey* [delighted] It's jist like it always was, Hannie There a-waitin'—

*Hannie* Mostly on account of the Ikes bein' on it And another thing I like to hotfoot it all over creation—and that's a fact But ever once in a while I git so homesick I'd purt' nigh kick Paw in the pants and hotfoot it back I wanta set quiet once in a while and drink milk out of a cold well

*Buzzey* We got milk, Hannie Ever since ole Reddy come in with her calf—

*Hannie* But Paw's sich a goer Has to cross that next crick, or make the next aidge of town 'fore sundown Him and me don't hit it off complete Listen to me, I'm gonna tell you sump'n Men is s' crazy Some wants to set on a farm till they dry up and blow away—like Buzzey here Or some wants to go streakin' across the country, hell-bent fer high water—like Paw If they was jist a half-way crazy man who liked to streak, and liked to set—*both* A nonsensical strappin' man who had a good time settin' or streakin'—but who had a good time— [*She breaks off*] Now tell me things

*Black Ike* Whut about?

*Hannie* Oh, anything The way you used to

*Black Ike* [to Red] 'Bout the ghostes?

*Red Ike* On Mabel Gardner's bed-post?

*Hannie* I heard that

*Black Ike* I know! The man in the sack

*Red Ike* Chinaman!

*Black Ike* Sewed in a gunny-sack

*Red Ike* Mad as a steer!

*Black Ike* Hung up to the ceiling!

*Red Ike* Ramped and teared and snorted!

*Hannie* I heard that, too

*Black Ike* [disappointed] Oh! She's heard that [*Revvng*] Oh, I know! We'll tell her about Texas! Wanta hear about Texas?

*Hannie* Whut about Texas?

*Black Ike* Well, we seen sich a sight, didden we, Red?

*Red Ike* Down at the Switch as we come th'ough

*Black Ike* A man th'owed in the jail fer gettin' drunk

*Red Ike* He got drunk and crazy and wild And he yelled My, how he yelled!

*Black Ike* Whut was it he yelled! "Borned in Texas—" How'd it go?

*Red Ike* [loudly]

Wild and reckless,  
Borned in Texas,  
Suckled by a bear,  
Steel backbone,  
Tail screwed on,  
Twelve feet long,  
Dare any son-of-a-bitch  
to step on it!

*Hannie* Purty good!

*Buzzey* [disgusted] Purty good!

*Red Ike* Nen the marshal got a-holt of of him, and the jedge said "Twelve days in jail, one fer ever foot of yer long tail" So they went to th'ow him in jail and he kicked the jedge offen the bench and made jist plum hash outa the courtroom first 'fore they got him in the calaboose

*Hannie* [rapturously] Good!

*Buzzey* [disgusted] Good!

*Red Ike* My, a big, hulky, curly-headed, han'some ring-tail-tooter, wuzn't he, Black?

*Hannie* And whur is he?

*Red Ike* Sh! Down the road a piece

*Hannie* Outa jail?

*Black Ike* Shore Me'n Red seen him, 's we come along Like to scart us to death, too Come up on us, and said, "I broke outa jail, and if you tell on me, I'll break yer head" My, we wouldn't tell on him, would we, Red?

*Hannie [thoughtfully]* Down the road there?

*Black Ike [pointing back]* That road right there

*Buzzey* You ain't interested in a man like that, air you, Hannie? A man 'at breaks laws, and don't have no home, and goes shootin' around—

*Hannie [cryptically]* Shet up about it I hate a man like that

*Buzzey* That's whut I thought Here comes yer pap

[PAP RADAR comes in with an armful of hay for the horses He drops it in astonishment]

*Pap Rader* Red Ike and Black Ike [Gleefully] I knowed it, I knowed it! [To BUZZEY] Whut'd I tell you about h'ard hands!—Heel! Heel! Knowed they wouldn't work 'thout you around!

*Voice [off back]* Wild and reckless Borned in Texas!—

*Hannie [rushing over to PAP]* Hey, Pap, they's a man comin' along the road! [In an excited rush, thumping PAP on the chest at every sentence] Wild and reckless, borned in Texas! A tail twelve feet long! He fit his way into jail and outa jail, and he's comin' along that road there, and heavens and earth, whut're you gonna do!

*Voice [off back]* Steel backbone, tail screwed on—

*Hannie* Hear that! It's him! I'm gonna run in the wagon, quick!

*Pap* Why, Hannie! Nuthin' won't hurt you We're here

*Buzzey [coming over]* Don't you be a-feard, little womern I'll pertect you

*Hannie* Pertect me? [She laughs uproariously] Pertect a doodle-bug! I'm gonna go in the wagon—

*Buzzey* Whut you goin' in the wagon fer, Hannie?

*Hannie* I'm gonna put flour on my face and purty myself up, that's whut fer

[She goes up into the wagon]

[The two men stare after her, uncomprehendingly]

*Buzzey [puzzled]*. Now whut on earth's come over her?

*Pap* Damned if I know. Whut's this about a man?

*Buzzey* Why, Red and Black says this is a wild crazy handsome man, that beat up the jedge and smashed up the courtroom and broke outa jail down here in Verdigr

and says he was borned in Texas, and he's comin' along the road and—

*Pap* Borned in whur?

*Buzzey* Texas My, I can't make out whut that womern is up to!

*Pap [with an amused chuckle]* No one can't make out whut Hannie is up to I reckon I'll have some of that there stew 'fore it's all gone

[He crosses over to the pot and is helping himself, when a tall, rangy, slightly-drunk man in rough clothes and without a hat, comes into sight An empty pistol holster hangs at his belt The sun has set by this time, and it begins to grow dark The man stops short, seeing the four men]

*Man* Now, who in hell—? [Uncertainly] Howdy—

*Pap* Howdy yerself, Mister

*Man [with relief]* Thought you might be the marshal Shore don't want to see that marshal again! It wouldn't be safe—fer him [Seeing the IKES] Hello, if here ain't the two little twins I seen down the road a piece—

*Red Ike* We ain't twins

*Black Ike* We're cousins

*Man* Cousins? You look like twins to me

*Red Ike [disarmingly]* Have it yer own way, Mister Ain't no harm in bein' twins, if you say so

*Man [generously]* I'll tell you, though, I'd jist as soon you'd be cousins as twins I don't wanta argy about it

*Red Ike* Suit yerself, Mister Texas

*Texas* How'd you know my name's Texas?

*Red Ike* Oh, we know all about you!

*Black Ike* Wild and reckless, borned in Texas!

*Texas* That don't make my name Texas

*Black Ike* Oh, we know yer name ain't Texas

*Texas* You do?

*Black Ike* We jist called you that

*Texas* Well, jist the same—my name's Texas

*Red Ike* It is?

*Texas* You don't think it ud be Arkansaw, do you?

*Red Ike* I tell you, Mister, Texas is as good a name as any

*Black Ike* Better'n any!

*Red Ike* Jist about

*Black Ike* It plumb is!

*Texas* [indicating PAP] Is this here yer Paw?

*Red Ike* It's Pap Rader He ain't our pap, though

*Black Ike* Not as we know of

*Texas* Howd' do, Mr Rader

*Pap* [cordially] We been hearin' about you, Mr Texas Hear you beat up the jedge, and broke outa jail, and raised hell and high water complete, down here in Verdgree

*Texas* [modestly] Oh, it wasn't so much

*Pap* Sounded purty good to me

*Texas* Well, I—I was jist feelin' a little good

*Pap* It don't do to be so bashful about it Have some stew?

*Texas* Don't mind if I do They don't seem to have no short order counter in the Verdgree calaboose

[PAP gives him stew He sits down and begins to eat]

*Pap* They ort to put one in

*Texas* [hopefully] Mebbe they will some day, when they git to realizin'

*Pap* I shore hope so

*Texas* They won't be able to git no one in their old jail, they don't do sump'n'

*Pap* This here is Mr Hale

*Texas* Howd' do, Mr Hale

*Buzzey* [sullenly] Howdy

*Texas* [politely] You look porely

*Buzzey* [huffily] I don't know

*Texas* I tell you, you look like a man hadn't had his fill of sump'n—I can't make out whut

*Red Ike* [brightly] Guessed it that time, Mr Texas! His wife jist divorced him

*Texas* Oh!

*Buzzey* [furiously] Shet up yer mouth, Red Ike, I'll knock you down! [He stamps off into the woods muttering] Folks a-buttin' into business that don't concern 'em—

*Texas* He kinda takes it to heart, don't he?

[He looks after him]

*Pap* Well, it tain't no joke to lose a womern

*Texas* [sympathetically] No, that's right

*Pap* 'Specially one as strappin' and full of the devil as the one he lost

*Texas* Well, she musta been blind she married a man like that

*Pap* Well, she hadn't saw many men when she married Buzzey

*Texas* I reckon not! [Judicially] A womern ort to marry her a man that ud show her a good time

*Pap* Yep, that's whut I think

*Texas* If this here womern's so strappin' and full of the ole devil like you say, some-one shore ort to kick her paw in the pants fer lettin' her marry a man like that un

*Pap* You know, Mr. Texas, that's whut I been a-thinkin'

*Texas* And if I ever meet up with him, I'm gonna do some heavy bootin' myself—right whur he sets down—

*The Ikes* Hee, hee!

[They shake with mirth]

*Texas* Whut're you hee-heenin' about?

*Pap* Go and git some wood, 'fore I smack you one Both of you!

*Red Ike* Hee, hee, hee! You got wood, Mr Rader!

*Black Ike* Pine and hickory both! Scads of it! Hee, hee, hee, oh my-o!

*Pap* [advancing on him] The liver of a rattlesnake! [The Ikes scramble out of reach] Git some buckets there under the wagon and bring some warter from the crick Git a move on! [The Ikes go out obediently, snickering] Have to excuse them little shavers [He taps his head] Not bad—not quite wrong, but not quite right You never know whut they're a-gonna do next [He looks into the pot] Guess we've et up all the stew, so I'll jist warsh out the pot, agin they fetch me that warter

[He pours a small bucket of water in it, rinses it around, and pours it out]

*Texas* [helpfully] Look out, you don't burn yerself

[He rolls and lights a cigarette]

*Pap* I been burned by better pots'n this'n

*Texas* You always traveled around like this?

*Pap* Ever since my old womern died—and before that Why, I've saw this country when you couldn't git th'ough it, it was so tangled up in br'ars

*Texas* [thoughtfully] They's things worse'n br'ars

*Pap* Whutta you mean?

*Texas* Well, I tell you, pardner, it used to be a feller could go 'round and about, and enjoy hisself Now it looks like somebody's tuck it into his head to put up a lot

of rules and regulations a feller can't make head ner tail of, and *can't even remember* Why, they jist put me in jail fer gettin' drunk and yellin'— You'd think it was a sin to use yer voice out loud!

Pap [*sympathetically*] I know jist the way you feel Now, take me—they's plenty to eat in this yere country, berries and roas'-n'ears and rabbits—and it looks like they call it stealin' to fill yer belly

Texas. Yep, I hate rules, and I hate fences I tell you, Mr Rader, we orten't to stand for either one of 'em

Pap You feel that-a-way, too?

Texas Criminee, yes! I don't wanta bother no one And I don't want no one a-botherin' me

Pap [*putting out his hand*] Shake, pardner We'll git along

[HANNIE, *primped and powdered extravagantly, comes down the steps of the wagon*]

Hannie Who's that you're a-shakin' hands with, Pap? [*Her eyes sparkle with good-humor*] I can't make out nuthin' but a smudge and a pair of legs

Texas [*grinning*] This here smudge is me, lady And the legs, too—I reckon they're mine

Hannie Well, I seen worse

Pap Make you acquainted to my daughter Hannie, Mr Texas

Texas Howd' do?

Hannie Mr Texas? Thought that was a state

Texas [*largely*] Oh, Texas is named after me

Hannie Oh!

Texas And I'm a kind of a state *myself*, in a way of talkin'

Hannie State of Smart-Alec, I'd call it

Texas Looky here, Miss Hannie, I've spanked women like you

Hannie You ain't even *saw* a womern like me, let alone spanked one

Texas [*baffled*] You got a kind of a jokin' daughter, ain't you, Mr Rader?

Pap [*chuckling*] Blamed 'f I know when she *is* or when she *ain't*!

Hannie When you've saw as many funny lookin' sights as I have, you'll turn to jokin', too, Mr Texas—

Texas [*ruffled*] To hell with you!

Hannie [*blandly*] It eases yer mind quite a bit

Texas Air you meanin' me, *personal*, as funny-lookin'?

Hannie Why, I wouldn't tromp on yer toes by meanin' anything like that! Not right off, jist after meetin' you, anyhow

Texas [*grinning, uncertainly*] I think I'd sorta like you, 'f I could jist make out whut you was up to

Hannie [*sweetly*]. Ain't that nice of you, though? Well, that's easy I heard about you from the Ikes And when I heard a loud shoutin' voice down the road a piece, I run in the wagon, and purtied myself up 'fore you got here—

Texas [*delighted*] You did?

Hannie Put on a clean dress, and put most a pint of flour on my face, to make me look nice

Texas [*with huge delight*] My goodness!

Hannie And smellamagoody pe'fume! A half a bottle Smell me

Texas Shore smell fine!

Hannie [*unckedly*] But now 'at you're here, and I've been made acquainted to you, I'm a good mind to change my dress again, and scrub my face 'th soap-suds and lye

Texas [*flabbergasted*] Aw!

Hannie Er even jist put on my night-gown, go right to bed, and sleep like a log, a-floatin' down the river

Texas I'll spank you yit, Miss Smarty!

Hannie Ketchin' 'fore hangin', Mr Texas! [*She sits down in the circle of fire-light*] Whur was you bound fer, Mr Texas?

Texas [*scratching his head*] Well,—I—I had *aimed* to make it up to Claremore 'fore it got night [*Retahating*] They's a womern up there who would be right glad to see me A red-headed one

Hannie Is that so? Well, I guess the law down here at Verdigrée kinda helt you up a bit, didn't it?

Texas Yeah, I guess it did

Hannie And it's too bad to let that womern jist *cry* all night Is they anything a-hunderin' you now?

Texas If you was as smart 'th yer eyes as you air 'th yer tongue, you'd see it's comin' night on me

Hannie And if you was as smart 'th yer tongue as you air 'th yer eyes, you'd ast 'f you could stay here all night and sleep by the f'ar—so the varmints won't bother you

Texas [*tentatively*] I might do that

Hannie Less'n you're agin' bein'

crowded Our roomin' house is filhn' up fast, from the looks of things

*Texas* Ain't it this full all the time?

*Hannie* Mostly they's jist Pap and me But tonight it looks like we're full up and runnin' over with whut you might call *men*

*Texas* How is that?

*Hannie* A case of "flies to the honey," if you ast me

*Texas* You bein' the honey, I guess

*Hannie* [*modestly*] Well, it ain't Pap

*Texas* 'D you mean to tell me, all these jere men—?

*Hannie* I don't mean to tell you nuthin'—

*Texas* The Ikes? And that Buzzey, is that his name?

*Hannie* [*contemptuously*] Oh, Buzzey!

*Texas* [*to PAP*] Why, Mr Rader, you told me Buzzey's womern had jist divorced him, and he was all broke up about her

*Pap* Well, if I told you, that's the way it is

*Texas* [*astounded*] Why, why— [*To HANNIE*] It's you! You're his wife!

*Hannie* Was—but ain't

*Texas* My God!

*Hannie* [*helpfully*] He's jist a-tryin' to git me back

*Pap* [*quickly*] Guess I'll jist mosey along and warter the horses while I'm able!

[*He goes nimbly out around the wagon, looking back, owlishly*]

*Texas* [*still flabbergasted*] Now whut'd you do that fer!

*Hannie* Do whut fer?

*Texas* Marry Buzzey

*Hannie* [*slyly*] You hadn't come along

*Texas* Whut was the matter 'th you?

*Hannie* Wasn't nuthin' the matter 'th me

*Texas* They musta been Sump'n serious

*Hannie* [*archly*] Well, I don't see how you figger that You see—I divorced him as soon as—as soon as I found out things I ain't married to him now

*Texas* No, that's right Course you—Look here, you ain't aimin' to marry him aguin, air you?

*Hannie* I ain't told him I wouldn't

*Texas* I won't allow it!

*Hannie* You won't! I don't see how you c'n hep yerself You don't know whut a plumb fascinatin' way Buzzey's got

*Texas* I'd like to know whur he keeps it!

*Hannie* [*with vulgar mirth*] Well, I hain't a-gonna tell you *that*! And besides, Mr State of Texas, I don't think I like the way you got a-twistin' yer tongue around the man I married onct and might marry again!

*Texas* If he didn't treat you right onct, he ain't apt to do it the second time Whut'd he do, anyhow—*special*? Why'd you divorce him—you musta had to give some reason

*Hannie* Well, 'f you're interested, the Ikes come and tole me 'bout Buzzey carryin' on 'th another womern

*Texas* Well, the damn fool!

*Hannie* Whut'd you mean?

*Texas* Had you—and went to carryin' on 'th another womern! He musta been crazy 's a suck-egg mule!

*Hannie* That's whut I thought [*Confidentially*] Only—you see—I quit carryin' on with him myself, and I guess he thought he had to do sump'n You know the way a man *will* And besides, I think I'll jist tell you— [*She looks around and sees that no one is within hearing*] I fixed it up myself—the whole thing!

*Texas* [*astounded*] You did!

*Hannie* Well, I had the Ikes do it fer me They found a womern some'eres—I don't know whur or who—and Buzzey done the rest

*Texas* My goodness, I mighta knowed it!

*Hannie* You won't go and tell on me, though, will you?

*Texas* Me? No, sir [*Largely*] You're safe 'th me, little womern!

*Hannie* [*amused*] Well, that's right big of you, I must say! Now then—how 'bout tellin' me about yerself? That red-headed womern You might start with her

*Texas* I made her up

*Hannie* I knowed that Jist wanted to see 'f you'd own up

*Texas* I don't think a *ordinary* man ud be safe around you! You're too damn smart! I might as well tell you about *me*, though so you'll *know* I was borned in Texas, and I ain't got no present job, though I c'n do most anything I want to—*if* I want to—and I'm on my way some'eres now I don't know whur

*Hannie* Look at them lightnin'-bugs!

*Texas* [ruffled] I was tellin' you about myself

*Hannie*. I c'n listen and look at the same time

*Texas* I'd consider it quite a favor if you'd look at me 'stad of lightnin'-bugs

*Hannie* I couldn't help myself, if you had a light on yore tail—like a lightnin'-bug!

*Texas* Now looky here, a man can't hit a womern that's smart-alec, so whut can he do?

*Hannie* Let her have her own way, I guess [Relenting] I wanta hear about you, though, honest I do

*Texas* Well, I've had my ups and downs, as you might have a notion of in yer noggin. I been and saw the world. Onct I run a ranch in Texas as big as the state of Alabama. I've saw them Kansas cyclones that drove a wheat-straw th'ough a live-oak tree, and I ain't never been licked by mortal man. Onct a whole crowd of mortal men—cowpunchers—*tried* to lick me, and they was seventy-three of 'em by count, and they all had shootin' arms

*Hannie* And whut'd you do?

*Texas* Hit their heads together. And run—

*Hannie* I thought you musta run

*Texas* Run *after* 'em! And ever one I ketched up with, I'd scalp with a ole piece of tin offen a plug of Horseshoe tobaccor. Why, half of Texas to this day is full of them bald-headed cowpunchers! And furthermore—even their kids is all borned 'thout a mite of hair on their heads!

*Hannie* [sarcastically] And whut else you been doin' besides scalpin' the state of Texas?

*Texas* I don't think you take me serious

*Hannie* I take you serious, but I don't swaller yore kind of fishbait. Not right at first. I got to git used to it

*Texas* [strangely] Oh, you're gonna git used to it! Whut I see, I *see*! And I see a lot about me and you that's been wrote down some-eres fer a long time. Looky here. I wanta tell you sump'n I never told nobody—I wasn't borned.

*Hannie* What!

*Texas* I wasn't borned in the ordinary way [Waggishly] I'd a-thought you'd knowed that by lookin' at me—[Lyrically] No, sir! I'm gonna tell you jist the way it was— Way out on the Texas prairie jist

this side the tall mountains set a small cabin made outa oak. And in that cabin, set a man and womern with a growed gal as purty as purty could be! Name was Liza. Mornin' come, she'd hop on her pony to ride the range, her old pap and mammy a-runnin' after her to stop her. "Come on back, Liza," they'd say—"the plains is full of coyotes. Them big old growly mountain b'ars has started to sharpen up their spring teeth." And seem' she didn't answer, they'd say, "Don't go fur, then, and come back soon." And away she'd go! Greased lightnin'! Dynamite on wings! Her pony stretched hisself out like a tentpole headed West! When she was seven mile and half away, she'd stop and look around. Now a funny thing! She had rid into a valley whur a river used to flow in the year 1. The tall grasses stood up like trees. A quar kind of a roarin' like lions come from some-eres among the tall grass. She'd git off her horse, look around, suspicious like, and go into that valley on foot. She'd stay all day. Who did she see thar? Whut did she do thar? Fer it soon was evident's the nose on yer face, she was gonna produce a infant. Who was its pappy? Whut kind of a roarin', hell-shootin', brawny big mountain of a man was she a-consortin' with? Somebody! With a whole valley fer his house, and a sky fer a roof over him! A nameless wonder of a giant with all out of doors to call his front room. A secret man that roared when he talked and shuck the ground like a earthquake rumblin'! Fin'ly one night—Liza lay in her pappy's cabin. Wild hosses come a-nickerin' and trompin' around. Great big b'ars as high as hills begin to growl sump'n fierce. All of a sudden, there was a crash and a bang and a clatter! Thunder and hail and lightnin', hell f'ar and brimstone! The cabin whur Liza lay cracked itself wide open from stern to stern, beam-end to beam-end, hind-end to gullet! And when the smoke cleared away, out I stepped, full-size, dressed to kill, in a ten-gallon hat, boots and chaps, a gun in ar'y hand, and both guns a-poppin'! And that's how I got started!

*Hannie* [carried away, in spite of herself] I b'lieve to my soul you're tellin' the truth!

*Texas* Course I'm tellin' the truth!

*Hannie* [recovering herself] The truth—and whut else?

*Texas* You don't think I'd lie to you—



just after meetin' you—do you? You're the first womern I ever met up with that I felt like explainin' to jist how I come on the earth. And if it's kinda hard to swaller right at first, you shorely can believe my doin's down here at Verdigrée, can't you?

Hanne Well, I—

Texas Mopped up the place slick as grease on a possum! You'd orta be proud to know me!

Hanne I never seen a man like you in my life!

Texas They *ain't* another man like me—in anybody's life!

Hanne If you ain't a lot of talk!

Texas Look here, they's two ways to keep outa trouble, and one of 'em is to talk. I've talked my way outa more didoes 'n you c'n shake a stick at. You don't wanta git all wropped up in scorn fer a feller's tongue a-workin'.

Hanne I always noticed the feller that's Old Busy Tongue, when it comes right down to it, he's a coward and a skeer-cat. I bet now, if the marshal from down here at Verdigrée was to come a-sneakin' up on you now, you wouldn't know whut to do 'th yer-self.

Texas Do! First I'd put my fist right smack kudab *th'ough* him, and clean out on the other side. Nen after I'd got that done, I'd tromp on him 'th both feet, nen th'ow him in that pot of bilin' water and cook him good.

Hanne Fiddlesticks! You wouldn't do no sich of a thing! [*Thoughtfully, puzzled*] They's sump'n funny about you, though—fer all yer talk. Sounds kinda true, even when it ain't.

Texas It's gospel—ever word I speak!

Hanne Can you look over a tree?

Texas [*puzzled*] What's that got to do with it? I'm six foot tall.

Hanne [*with some relief, as if something had been answered*] Well, that's quite a size. Whur air you a-goin' after today, Mr Texas, if I ain't a-butan' in?

Texas I ain't said I was goin' anywhurs—*yet*. It all depends.

Hanne Depends on whut?

Texas [*casually*] Oh, on which a-way the wind blows.

Hanne [*casual herself*] Well, it 'pears to me the wind has died down complete.

Texas I been a-noticin' that Trees ain't

hardly a-movin' I'd shore hate to exert myself more'n a tree.

Hanne [*rising*] Well, you c'n sleep here by the far 'th the rest of 'em, less'n you're afeared they'll bite.

Texas Oh, when it comes to *bitin'*—

Hanne And see how you like our com-p'ny.

Texas I could tell you a lot about that right now.

Hanne You better save it. Here comes the Ikes with warter.

[*The Ikes come in with buckets and start pouring water in the pot. PAP comes in and pokes up the fire, putting more wood on it, so that it burns brightly*]

I'm a-goin' to bed. [*She goes toward the wagon*] Good night, everybody.

All Good night.

Hanne [*roguishly*] Tell Buzzzey "Good night" fer me, somebody. And tell him I said he could sleep right bang up clost to the hot far—and *imagine*!

[*She goes up into the wagon*]

Pap Well, it's bed time fer all, I reckon. We go to bed 'th the chickens. Gonna stick around, Mr Texas?

Texas 'F you got a bed fer me.

Pap Well, they's a half a bushel of oak leaves right under yer feet.

Texas Them'll do fine.

[*He starts raking them up into a pile. BUZZEY comes in. They all begin to lie down around the fire. PAP goes to sleep almost immediately*]

Texas [*raising on his elbow—to the Ikes*] Say, you, Red and Black, 'd you ever sleep in a tree?

Red Ike Black here was borned and raised in a tree. Had a long tail, they tell me, and used to swing from one limb to another.

Black Ike [*grinning foolishly*] Did not!

Texas How do you sleep at night? Like a log?

Red Ike Not us! Can't hardly sleep none a-tall, Mr Texas. The least little ole sound—!

Texas That's fine. Me—I sleep like a log. Why, I got fifty cents on me, and I kinda wondered f' you wouldn't do me a favor?

Black Ike Shore, we would, wouldn't we, Red? [*Eagerly*] Anything you say, Mr Texas.



*Texas* Here [*He tosses it over*] 'D you reckon you c'd sleep down the road a piece jst yond' side of that bend? I'm kinda 'spectin' someone to come along—and I'd be much obliged 'f you'd skin up the road quicker'n lighntnin' and tell me 'fore he gits here—that is, if he *does* take a notion to come this a-way I don't want to hurt him—and that's the God's truth

*Red Ike* [*grinning*] Reckon we know who it'll be, don't we, Black?

*Black Ike* 'F he comes along we'll be yere 'fore you c'n say "Jack Robison," won't we, Red?

*Red Ike* 'Fore you c'n say "Jack," Mr Texas!

[*They go out down the road*]

*Buzzey* [*who has been listening*] 'Spectin' someone, 'd you say, Mr Texas?

*Texas* Oh, you never can tell

*Buzzey* I offered them little fools five dollars apiece to git back to my farm, and they wouldn't take it And here they go and gobble yore fifty cents like they hadn't saw a nickel since the flood rolled away.

*Texas* [*lazily*] Funny, ain't it, the way you take to some people And some people you can't set down in eighty feet of

*Buzzey* 'D I hear you say you didn't sleep so good?

*Texas* Me? No, sir! When my mind ain't a-worryin' 'bout nuthin', I sleep like a dead man

*Buzzey* [*with studied casualness*] And how is yer mind now, Mr Texas?

*Texas* [*smiling*] They ain't nuthin' on it, a-tall, Mr Hale, nuthin' a-tall I'm as easy in my mind as a new-born bronc! And sich a deep dark hole of sleepin' as I'm goin' into will be wrote down in books! I bet I don't wake up till the sun does And I bet I dream!

*Buzzey* [*grimly*] Yeah, I reckon you will

[*Silence Darkness creeps in among the trees and blots out everything but the burning fire A night owl hoots eerily, a frog by the creek bank begins to croak*]

## ACT TWO

### SCENE ONE

*Dawn, the next morning The fire has died down, but the embers still smoulder, and steam rises from the boiling water A*

*faint grayish light steals into the woods A rooster crows, very near PAP wakes, sits up The rooster crows again PAP scrambles to his feet, finds a rock and steals out quickly There is a flurried squawk, and in a moment PAP comes in again carrying a dead Dominecker rooster He walks quietly, so as to disturb no one, ponders a bit, looks at the pot of boiling water, and making up his mind, hangs the dead bird on the wagon Then he smiles with triumphant satisfaction, and lies down again*

*In a moment, BUZZEY rises cautiously on one elbow and looks about carefully at the other men Then he gets up and is stealing off into the woods with a rheumatic limp when PAP lifts himself up and calls in a hoarse whisper*

*Pap* Hey!

*Buzzey* [*wheeling about as if shot*] Sh!

[*He makes signs for PAP to shut up*]

*Pap* Whur you goin'?

*Buzzey* Sh!

*Pap* Whur you goin', I said!

*Buzzey* Crimineel!

[*He steals back and motions PAP over to one side as far from the sleeping TEXAS as possible PAP goes over reluctantly*]

*Buzzey* [*softly*] Now go and lay down again like you was, you hear?

*Pap* How's that?

*Buzzey* [*a little louder*] I say, go and lay down again

*Pap* Lay down?

*Buzzey* [*nods a worried "Yes" and glances over anxiously toward TEXAS*] And go back to sleep

*Pap* [*grinning*] Got all the sleep I want [*He stretches luxuriously, and slaps his thighs*] See you limp in' like you got the rheumatiz

*Buzzey* Sh! You'll wake him up!

*Pap* I don't keer 'S daylight, ain't it? Hey, I kilt a rooster! He set in a black-jack tree a-crown' and I f'ard just one rock and down he come!

*Buzzey* Christamighty, shet up, can't you?

*Pap* A Dominecker rooster not two year old! They say it's bad luck to take the feathers offen a chicken kilt with a rock Cook him, feathers and all! Course they say that toad frogs makes warts on you, too, but I don't b'lieve that [*For the first time*

noticing BUZZEY's manner] You got the St Vitus dance, er whut in tarnation ails you!

Buzzey Listen—go and lay down and quit a-makin' noise, can't you?

Pap [suspiciously] Whut're you up to?

Buzzey Never mind Do like I tell you

Pap My God, is this yore house or mine? I'll do as I like, Mr Buzzey, and don't you fergit it!

Buzzey Listen! You don't wanta lose Hannie, do you?

Pap Lose Hannie? I ain't a-losin' her

Buzzey No, not *yt!* But it's a-comin' The first thing you know this here Texas'll be runnin' off and takin' Hannie with him Nen both of us'll be outa luck I want her back for a wife, and you wanta keep her fer daughter Looks like we could work together

Pap I don't know whut you're talkin' about Who said Hannie was jist gonna up and hotfoot it after anybody that come along?

Buzzey Looky here, you know about women, don't you?

Pap Whut about 'em?

Buzzey [wisely] Onct they've had a man, they can't get along without one

Pap Oh! I reckon that's right I've knowed a heap of widders that ud take up with anything in pants

Buzzey Well, Hannie's a widder, ain't she?

Pap Grass You not bein' dead

Buzzey Grass or no grass, it's all the same

Pap Whut was you aimin' to do, then?

Buzzey [cautiously] Go down here to Verdigrée, rouse up the marshal, and tell him whur Texas is at

Pap Whut'll you git out of it?

Buzzey Well, I aim to jist keep after Hannie till she's all wore out, and she'll marry me to git rid of me follerin' her around

Pap And whut'd I get out of it?

Buzzey Well, if Hannie goes back with me, you're always free to mosey along by my place and see her, ain't you? While if this here hell-raiser tuck her away, he'd likely end up way down in Texas some'eres, and the first you know, he'd trade Hannie off fer ten head of them Longhorn steers—and you'd never see hide ner hair of her again

Pap [convneced] Sh! Don't talk so

much, you'll wake him up! Why in hell didn't you go sooner?

Buzzey I meant to, but I overslept

Pap [outraged] Overslept! This ain't no time fer oversleepin'! It's the time to shake yer tail and oversleep afterwards! Git on there now, and do whut you're a-gonna do!

Buzzey Don't hurry me

Pap Stand around a-gabbin'! Git!

Buzzey [annoyed] I'm a-gettin'

[He starts out TEXAS sits up, yawning]

Texas Oh, is that you, Mr Hale?

[BUZZEY stops as if shot]

Buzzey [swallowing] Ye-yeah, it's me

Texas Goin' some'eres?

Buzzey [uncertainly] Oh—g—goin' down along the crick bank

Texas Don't slip and fall in Good mornin', Pap

Pap Mornin' 'erself Sleep all right?

Texas [stretching lazily] Slept fine But had sich a dream [To BUZZEY, who is stealing out again] Hey, Mr Hale! Come here, while I tell you [BUZZEY comes back reluctantly] I was jist tellin' Pap Rader 'bout a dream Quarest dream I ever had! It seemed like I was layin' here 'th my head up clost to the f'ar, when I heard feet a-comin' and a-goin', and voices a-shakin' and spittin' out words, and I looked up and they was two men a-standin' over me One of 'em—

Pap [worried] This was a dream, wa'n't it?

Texas This was a dream One of these men had a bald head and looked like a buzzard, and the other'n looked like he was gonna fall plumb apart from bein' put together so loose

Pap [with an unconvincing laugh] Sounds like me and Buzzey!

Texas Looked like you, all right But the resemblance stopped right there, fer these two put their heads together, and I could hear every word they said, though they kept sh-ashin' each other, and whutta you think they was aimin' to do?

Buzzey I—I couldn't tell you

Texas Them low-down wart-hogs was plannin' to sic the marshal on to me and put me in jail

Pap Why—why, whutta you know about that! You dreamt that, Mr Texas?

Texas That was a dream, all right

Give me a cold sweat to think of it I'm shore glad I woke up when I did, 'cause it felt like, in the dream, I was tied hand and foot a-layin' here on the ground, and couldn't move a muscle

*Pap* Hee, hee—kind of a narrow escape, wa'n't it?

*Buzzey* [*meaning his own*]. Shore was a narrow escape!

*Texas* [*casually*] I'm glad it turned out to be a dream, fer if it hadn't a-been, I'd a-been compelled to rouse myself up, and cut the liver and lights outa both of them fellers, and th'ow 'em to the dogs, before breakfast

*Pap* That ud be the thing to a-done to 'em, all right Ain't that right, Buzzey?

*Buzzey* [*in alarm*] Ye-yeah, that's right Well, I guess I—I got business down the crick a while

*Texas* Don't be in no hurry, Mr Hale Pap'll be givin' you some of that rooster a-fore long

*Buzzey* Rooster!

*Texas* [*smiling*] Domnecker rooster, kilt with a rock

*Pap* My God!

*Texas* Whut's the matter? 'D I dream that, too?

*Pap* Holy Moses!

*Texas* [*easily*] Don't you worry none, Pap I won't tell on you fer killin' somebody's rooster He made a lot of noise, anyway, and someone ort to a-kilt him [*Dropping his jesting manner, to BUZZEY*] Now looky here, you sneakin' pike, don't you never try a trick like that on me, or I'll make a stew outa you! You hear me!

*Buzzey* W-whut kind of a trick, Mr Texas?

*Texas* [*fiercely*] You know, all right I heared you I'll bash yer head in next time I'm a real easy-goin' man or I'd do it anyhow! And you, Pap Rader, a-listenin' to a sap-sucker like this un I'd a-thought you had more sense in that pin head of yourn

*Pap* Well, blame me, I don't want you a-runnin' away with Hannie!

*Texas* Whut've you got to do with Hannie?

*Pap* Why, she's my daughter, ain't she?

*Texas* I don't keer if she is yore daughter!

*Pap* She's better off with me than she'd be with you

*Texas* Oh, is that so? I ain't fit com-

p'ny, is that it? Well, I'll jst tell you, whut I'm a-gonna do I'm gonna learn you a lesson you won't fergit! [*Boastingly*] I'm gonna take Hannie away with me, after all Hadn't meant to, a-tall I'll put her under one arm and claw my way to clear down in the Verdgree bottom some'eres outa sight, whur I c'n have her all by myself—and I don't know, after that!

*Pap*. She won't go with you

*Texas* She won't, huh? She'll jump at the chanct I know a thing or two when I see it, I guess She'd kick you both in the pants if I told her to, and lay down and let me walk on her [*Vulgarily*] Well, mebbe I don't mean walk on her

*Buzzey* [*outraged*] You quit it a-talkin' about my fo'mer wife, that-a-way!

*Pap* You quit it a-talkin' about my fo'mer daughter that-a-way!

*Texas* [*his tongue unloosed, enjoying himself*] And you won't never see her again, neither one of you Why, she'll git so used to me, she'd spit in anybody's face that said a harm word about me! But after I git her well-trained to ride proper, I'm gonna leave her some'eres to git along the best way she can! Learn you two a lesson! [*The flap of the wagon is thrown aside angrily, and HANNIE comes down the steps*]

*Hannie* How's that, Mr Texas?

*Texas* [*like a punctured bag*] Eh—Whut're you— Whut?

*Hannie* Whut's all this you're a-gonna do about me?

*Texas* Why—why—I ain't aimin' to do nuthin'.

*Buzzey* He said he was, Hannie! Said he was gonna walk on you, and spit in yer eye, and I don't know whut all he didn't say!

*Hannie* Shet up, I'll tend to this! [*Looking TEXAS over with great scorn*] Lemme have a look at this hell-raisin' wonder He don't look so big, and he don't look so handsome, but he's got a way with the women!

*Buzzey* Give it to him, Hannie!

*Pap* [*turning on BUZZEY*] Shet up, you!

*Hannie* They drownd themselves by the drove in the Rio Grande whenever he comes around! He's scalped the state of Texas, and run off 'th their wives He was borned full-size with boots and chaps, and some giant for his pappy!

*Buzzey* Yanh, sink a canthook in him!

*Pap* Aw, let him alone, Hannie!

*Hannie* He's fit his way into jail and outa jail, and he's a ring-tail tooter with a tongue a mile long, and if he don't like to use it!

*Texas* Now, Hannie—!

*Hannie* [blazing mad] Don't you Han-me me! Gonna run off with me, and me under yer arm, is that it?

*Buzzey* He said he was, Hannie! Burn him up! Blister him!

*Hannie* Gonna git me well-broke to like it, so I'd spit in my pappy's face if he said a word agin you, was that it!

*Buzzey* Ever damn word, the side wander!

*Hannie* My God, if I ever seen a lantern-jawed cock-eyed idiot that couldn't say "Boo!" to a flyer, you're it! Ever time I look at you, I git ringworm!

*Texas* Now Hannie, listen to me—

*Hannie* I listened to too much a'ready—

*Texas* These two was plannin' to give me up to the law so I got mad and my tongue run off with me, can't you understand?

*Hannie* Understand? I'd druther see a cow full of wood ticks than to look at you

*Texas* [miserably] Aw, Hannie—

*Hannie* Why'n't you beat it up the road, and find a place that ud suit you better? They ain't nuthin' here that's in yore style! And they ain't a soul here that wouldn't like to cut you up and feed you to the coyotes—if the coyotes could stand it! Personally I'd ruther have a nice big piece of a striped skunk! Beat it, I said!

*Texas* [seeing he's ruined everything] I wish't you'd listen to me

*Hannie* Gether yer things and git!

*Texas* I ain't got nuthin' to gether

*Buzzey* [suddenly becoming courageous] And don't you never come around decent folks again or they're liable to brand and dehorn you!

*Pap* [turning on him] Shet up you,—let a feller alone, can't you?

*Buzzey* Well, I—

*Pap* Let him alone! He ain't done nuthin' to you!

[There is a crackle of twigs and running footsteps The IKES burst into sight, in wild excitement]

*Red Ike* Hey, Texas, man a-comin'!

*Black Ike* The marshal from Verdigrée!

*Red Ike* Big man 'th a big black hat and a pistol!

*Black Ike* Two pistols, and a ca'tridge belt a-poppin' 'th bullets!

*Red Ike* Comin' along the road like a bat outa thunder!

*Black Ike* Makin' the dust bile!

*Red Ike* Hurry up, 'f you don't wanta see him!

*Black Ike* Swim the crick!

*Red Ike* Climb a tree!

*Black Ike* Hide in the blackberry bushes!

*Red Ike* Bury yerself in the ground! Go on, don't stand there!

*Texas* [quietly] How's that?

*Red Ike* Man a-comin', I tell you! The marshal from Verdigrée a-lookin fer trouble!

*Texas* Oh, the marshal

*Red Ike* Well, hain't he the one you thought might come along? You ain't got a minute!

*Black Ike* Shake yer traces!

*Red Ike* Bust yer britchin'!

*Black Ike* Rap and rair! Hide and hair! Swaller the air!

*Texas* Let him come

*The Ikes* What!

*Texas* Let him come, I said

*Red Ike* Whut! You hain't a-gonna just stand there?

*Black Ike* He'll git you!

*Red Ike* Th'ow you in jail—

*Black Ike* Shoot a hole th'ough you!

*Texas* We'll see about that

*Black Ike* Oh! Oh, I see! Gonna give him his money's worth!

*Red Ike* Gonna fight him!

*Black Ike* Bloody his nose!

*Red Ike* Cave in his stummick!

*Black Ike* Knock his years down!

*Red Ike* Jamb all his teeth out! Whee, gonna be high ole doin's! [Jumping around with excitement] Fight, fight!

*Black Ike* [doing the same] Bettan' on Texas!

*Red Ike* Fight, fight!

*Pap* [to the Ikes] Here, you Ikes—you make more noise 'n thirteen wildcats [To Texas] You ain't gonna run?

*Texas* No

*Pap* Well, I'm a-bettan' on you

*Texas* Much obliged

*Pap* You might get shot

*Texas* Well

*Pap* Tell you whut I'll do, pardner 'F you git shot, I'll bury you nice—and put up a tomb stone made out of a weepin' willer tree With a sign on it that says "He fit and died"

*Texas* That'll be nice

*Pap* Oh, it tain't no trouble a-tall [*He begins fixing the fire*] In that f'ar— [*He points with a stick*—I got hick'ry fer smoke, chestnut fer noise, white pine fer blaze, and oak fer slow-burnin' That f'ar is the original hell-f'ar 'F you say so, Texas, I'll give that marshal a little shove, and 'f he falls in it, that ain't my fault

*Texas* [*shaking his head*] Thanky, jist the same

*Pap* Oh, it wouldn't be a mite of trouble! Here he comes, I guess

[*After a moment, the MARSHAL, a large, rather worried-looking man in a big black hat, comes in with a pistol in his hand He stops short*]

*Marshal* Hands up, the lot of you! [*They all put up their hands except HANNIE, who has backed up again the wagon steps*] You too, lady [*She gives him a contemptuous look, and puts her hands up*] Now then, Mr Borne-in-Texas, I've got you again And this time, you ain't gonna git away Course it wasn't me that let you git away before, jist remember that! My job was to git you before Jedge Snodgrass fer disturbin' the peace, and I got you there I'd orta had more sense 'n to turned you over to that coward of a Neb, I reckon But it's on his head fer lettin' you do whut you done to the jedge and the courtroom Godamighty though, from the looks of thngs, you musta been full of elephant juice You must be Mr Samson, 'fore he got his hair cut! [*To PAP*] Is he a friend of yourn?

*Pap* Yes, sir, he's a friend of mine

*Buzzey* [*butting in*] He is not a friend of Pap's! Course we knowed who he was, Mr Marshal, and I was aimin' to sneak off and tell you whur he was at And Pap here was gonna help me

*Pap* [*hotly*] I was not! I jist had a brain storm fer about a minute a-listenin' to you a-shootin' off yer head! They hain't nuthin' to keep a feller from changin' his mind, is they? [*To the MARSHAL*] Why, Mr Marshal, I'd be a purty sap-sucker to go a-turnin' anyone over to a hound-dog

like you! I don't like you ner no one that looks like you!

*Marshal* Mebbe you better consider yoreself arrested, too

*Texas* [*breaking in*] Aw, let Pap alone, Mr Marshal 'F it's me you're after, well, you got me We might jist as well hit the pike now, as to stand here a-talkin'.

*Marshal* [*surprised*] Well, Mr Texas, you hain't gonna put up no fight? You got more sense 'n I give you credit for You hain't got a gun hid on you anywhurs, have you?

*Texas* You tuck my gun away from me, didn't you?

*Marshal*, Yeah, I did

*Texas* Well, they don't grow on trees

*Marshal* [*to BUZZEY*] Has he got ary gun on him?

*Buzzey* I ain't saw ary un

*Marshal* Well I'm much obliged to you, Mister, for yer good intentions You c'n put yer hands down 'f you want to

*Buzzey* [*putting his hands down*] That's all right

*Marshal* How'd you happen to git mixed up 'th a crowd like this, anyhow?

*Buzzey* [*righteously*] I ain't mixed up with it! I used to be kinda married to this womern here, but—she don't raily b'long to this here kind of crowd any more'n I do I'm a farmer Got a hundred and sixty acre up here by Vinita

*Marshal* Is that so? How's crops?

*Buzzey* Turnble These here h'ard hands has run off and left the Jimson weeds and cuckle burrs to smother up everthing I got planted

*Marshal* I used to be a farmer myself 'F you ever need a good hand, you better not make me a offer, I'm li'ble to take it I git awful t'ard of marshallin' fer a livin' So that's yer wife, is it?

*Buzzey* Well, I—you see—she used to be

*Marshal* Oh! I see Well, good rid-dance, I reckon

*Buzzey* [*angrily*]. Who said good rid-dance?

*Marshal* Hain't it?

*Buzzey* I never said it was

*Marshal* [*tolerantly*] Well, you ort to know

*Hannie* [*breaking in angrily*] Have I got to stand here 'th my hands in the air all day?

Marshal I reckon you don't

Hannie Well I hope not Looks like you could shet up talkin so much and take this here crimernal outa here I'd be right glad [*With real disappointment*] I thought he was sump'n special—a nine-footer—stridin' along 'th his head so high Now I know he's just a thung on stilts—and the stilts is all shaking and full of worm holes!

Texas You don't rally mean that, do you Hannie?

Hannie Why don't I mean it?

Texas Thought mebbe you wanted me to think it—just 'cause I talked about you that a-way I just want to tell you—my talkin' don't mean nuthin'—

Hannie It may not mean nuthin' to you but it does to me Oh you've got yerself into it, Mr Texas, you might's well like it

Texas Well, I don't like it

Hannie Put me under yer arm and claw yer way down into the bottom, will you?

Texas Go and rub it in

Hannie Ort to scratch yer eyes out!

Texas [*making a last attempt*] Listen—if I git out of this—and come back—whut'll you do?

Hannie Spit in yer face

Texas You shore?

Hannie [*deliberately*] Right between the eyes

Texas [*quietly*] Well, I reckon I won't be back here, then I reckon I won't be back nowhure now, till I git my second wind I been winded 'cause I run seventeen mile 'thout stoppin' and by a cyclone smackin' me plumb in the face But this is the first time I been knocked holler by a female Kinda gits a feller down in the mouth

[*The IKES, still with their hands in the air, begin to jump up and down like monkeys on strings*]

The IKES Fight, fight, nigger and a white! Fight, fight!

Marshal Here, you! Whut in hell's a-goin' on?

[*The IKES stop, abashed*]

Red Ike Beg yer pardon, mister

Marshal [*his mouth open*] If this hain't the craziest gang of hoodlums I ever seen! I better git myself outa here 'fore I start to eatin' my shirt-tail er sump'n!

Texas Whenever you're ready, Mr Marshal

Pap [*in utter astonishment*] Ain't you gonna do nuthin', Texas?

Texas No

Pap What! Not gonna boot this marshal in the tail and pick his teeth fer him?

Texas No

Pap Er cut off his head and show it to him! Hunt you even gonna give him just one in the jaw fer sample?

Texas No

Pap Not gonna do a form thing? Well fer lunds a-havin'!

Hannie [*scornfully*] Course he ain't! Didn't you know he wouldn't! [*To TEXAS*] 'Two ways to keep outa trouble Fight and talk" Don't look to me like he can do ary one!

Marshal Come on Mr Texas You c'n take yer hands down now [*TEXAS puts his hands down and starts out*] And if you make one false move, I'll put a hole in you you c'n see daylight through!

Texas Looks to me like I've just made false moves enough And got quite a hole in me a'ready, fer my trouble I reckon I'll just try to keep from gettin' any more till the one I got is heeled up a little bit

[*He goes out, the MARSHAL following*  
The others watch them, PAP and the IKES with their hands still in the air]

Pap Well, I'm a cow and a calf! [*He suddenly remembers his hands and jerks them down* The IKES follow suit] God, I'm paralyz'd! [*He rubs his arms*] Never lifted a finger!

Buzzey Whut'd you expect?

Pap Well, he mighta kicked the marshal on the shins onct, anyhow

Buzzey [*joyously*] I told you, I told you! [*He does an impromptu capering jig*] Coward and a liar, and a ring toom toom!

[*He grins with crazy exuberance*]

Hannie Whut a fool!

[*She starts up the steps*]

Buzzey [*going over*] Shore proud of you, Hannie! A womern after my own heart Glad you come to yer senses Shore had me worried fer a minute, I tell you! I fergive you, though Yes sir, I fergive and feigit, that's the way I am Won't we have us a time, though? Git yer things together quick, and go home with me, right away! Hurry up!

Hannie [*stopping in astonishment*] How's that?

Buzzey Jump a train to Claremore, git spliced, hitched up together again the same

as before! Nen after that, we'll hop another train, and git home 'fore sundown!

*Hannie [unable to believe her ears]* Go home with you? *[She laughs uproariously]* Jawbone of a whale and hock of a terrapin! *[She turns on him, outraged and amused]* Go home with you? Why, you little dried-up blue-nosed old buzzard smellin' of a dead cow in the summer time! Go home with a corpse!

*[She comes down the wagon steps]*

*Buzzey [bewildered]* Hannie!

*Hannie* If you knowed whut I was gonna do, you'd have a conniption fit! Come on, you Ikes! We're a-goin' some'eres!

*[She dashes off into the woods, the Ikes dashing after her like a pair of grinning monkeys]*

*Buzzey [dazed]* My God, now whut's come over her!

## SCENE TWO

*Two hours later About 6 A.M.*

*The wrecked courtroom At the back, the judge's stand, on its little dais, is turned over, a picture hangs almost upside down above it One of the windows is broken, benches are overturned The door stands open, sagging on one hinge*

*The MARSHAL brings TEXAS in*

*Texas [laughing]* Jist look at this courtroom! Did I do all this?

*Marshal* Course you did! But they ain't nuthin' funny about it!

*Texas [with huge mirth]* Any kind of courtroom is funny to me But a wrecked courtroom—my, oh, my! And whut goes on in courtrooms is funnier yit!

*Marshal [with satisfaction]* Anh, you didn't think you'd be back here so quick, though, did you?

*Texas* I didn't think

*Marshal* I reckon you didn't Look at this yere room Mince meat! And you shore gonna pay fer it, too The jedge'll be here any minute now, and mebbe he won't be glad to see you, Mr Texas!

*Texas* You reckon?

*Marshal* I know

*Texas* My, my! Hey, think I'll jist put things to rights a little bit

*[He starts turning up benches]*

*Marshal [threateningly]* Here, whut're you up to?

*Texas* This ain't no decent kind of a

room to hold court in Look at that there jedge's desk, will you? *[He up-ends it, and puts it back where it belongs]* Now how did that pitcher git plumb upside down that a-way?

*[He straightens the picture over the desk, but takes so long doing it, that the MARSHAL comes over suspiciously]*

*Marshal* Whut you tryin' to do 'th that pitcher?

*Texas* Jist fixin' it so it won't fall down again, till it ort to And them benches! And that winder! *[With delight]* I musta been goin' good! I'll tell you, Mr Policeman, how it happened *[Confidentially]* I musta been drunk

*Marshal* Musta been?

*Texas [with regret]* It ain't right, neither, to git so drunk

*Marshal* I should say it ain't right

*Texas* Why, I mighta kilt somebody. And then whur'd I be?

*Marshal* Whur'd you think you ar, now?

*Texas [ruefully]* Yeow, I guess that's right, Mister You got a head on you! I'll tell you, though, if I'd a-kilt anyone, I'd ruther it ud been you I kilt, 'stid of that spindly little jedge

*Marshal* You better be keerful whut you say!

*Texas.* A little runt like him, 'twouldn't a-made no difference If I kilt a man, I'd want it to be a man, or it wouldn't be worth the trouble

*Marshal [with pride]* You'd find it a hard job to kill me, Mr Texas, and don't you forget it!

*Texas* I bet I would, too But it ud be worth it!

*Marshal [doubtfully]* I ain't so shore I like whut you're a-sayin'—all this yere talk about killin'—

*Texas* Don't you pay no attention to me, Mr Town Marshal Don't you worry yore head about me I ain't worth yore time A liar and a thief and a murderer like me—why, you orten't to stay in the same room with me Whyn't you wait outside?

*Marshal [worried]* Gittin' me worried I'll jist set here and keep you covered 'th my gun!

*[He takes his pistol out of the holster]*

*Texas* Whut size pistol you got, Mister?



*Marshal* That ain't none of yore business! You're a prisoner

*Texas* [*placatingly*] I didn't mean no harm Jist wanted to warn you—that gun of your'n had better be a 44 Why, I turn 38s

*Marshal* [*grimly*] Well, you'll be glad to know this is a 45

*Texas* Oh, that's all right, then! [*He looks out the window, grinning*] Jist look at that jail—a-layin' all over Indian Territory!

*Marshal* [*looking at his watch*] Crimineel! Here it is six o'clock! I can't figger out why Judge Snodgrass ain't come—I sent fer him long enough ago [*He looks out the door*] Well, here he is now, and high time No, 'taint—it's Neb—

*Texas* Is that the feller's name that was supposed to guard me in the calaboose—?

[*He grins*]

*Marshal* That's his name, all right—but I don't see whut's so funny about that?

*Texas* You hain't tuck a good look at him, then!

*Marshal* Say, you're a hell of a prisoner, you air! Ain't you got no respect fer the law?

*Texas* How's that?

*Marshal* I say, ain't you got no respect fer the law, a-tall?

*Texas* Me? Have I been a-breakin' the law again?

*Marshal* Have you been a— Whutta you think I arrested you fer in the first place?

*Texas* [*regretfully*] If I don't have the damndest time! Seems like I'm always breakin' some law or other 'thout knowin' it Must be might nigh a thousand laws in this yere country Why, I break one ever time I turn around to spit!

[*He spits*]

*Marshal* [*outraged*] Quit it a-spittin on the floor!

*Texas* My God, I guess that's a law, too! Law! A man's walkin' along a purty road a-singin' Up comes a marshal 'th a gun, drags him into a ugly courtroom The jedge gives him twelve days Whut fer?

[*He sits down glumly*]

[*NEB, very much patched up, comes in at the door*]

*Marshal* [*grinning in spite of himself*] If you ain't a sight now—!

*Neb* [*resentfully, glaring at TEXAS*] You'd be a sight, too, if a mule kicked you!

*Marshal* I guess I know what mule's been a-kickin' you! [*He grins*] Whur's Jedge Snodgrass at?

*Neb* He's a-comin', I reckon

*Marshal* Well, whyn't he hurry up?

*Neb* Guess he can't

*Marshal* [*exasperated*] Well, why can't he? Ain't he up yit—and it six o'clock? Here I go and ketch him this runaway prisoner, and now I got to go and wait a half a hour fer him to git here! Why's it tuck him so long?

*Neb* [*angrily*] Ast him why it's tuck him so long! Don't ast me!

*Marshal* Whew! Ain't in a very good humor, air you?

*Neb* Well, whut'd you go and put a wild-cat in my jail fer?

*Texas* I'm sorry, pardner, I didn't mean to th'ow you out the winder They ain't no hard feelin's, I hope

[*He starts toward him*]

[*NEB leaps back with a scream, snatches up a chair, and stands with it poised over his head, hysterically*]

*Neb* Git away from me! Stand back there, er I'll shore brain you 'th this cheer!

*Marshal* You must be skeered of him, Neb

*Neb* He better stand back, I tell you!

*Texas* I ain't gonna hurt you

*Neb* [*wildly*] Marshal, can't you call him off! I ain't a-skeered of him, but I'm shore h'ble to hurt him! Git back now, I told you!

[*A grim little man hobbles in at the open door*]

*Marshal* Good mornin', Jedge!

[*The Judge goes and sits down behind his desk without a word*]

*Judge* [*after a moment, coldly, rapping on his desk*] Order in the courtroom! [*NEB drops his chair, but stands holding it in readiness*] I ain't a-goin to pay no attention to the rightfulness or wrongfulness of procedure this mornin' The court's been defied and spit on, and I'm gonna do some defym' and spittin' myself! This here feller here has got drunk, which is agin the law He's smashed up the courtroom, which is agin the law He's broke outa jail after beatin' up the guard, which is agin the law, He's run plumb away, which is also agin the law Fer gettin' drunk, I only sentenced him to twelve days in the calaboose Now



then—addin' on to that—fer smashin up the courtroom and fer breakin' outa jail—

*Neb* And fer beatin' up the guard!

*Judge* And fer beatin' up the guard, yes, sir, fer all that I'm gonna sentence him some more

*Marshal* Whut about fer beatin' up the Jedge?

*Judge* Shet up! Nobody ast you to speak! I'm gonna sentence him then—fer gettin' drunk, fer resistin' officers, fer disturbin' the peace, fer escapin' and fer damagin' property—and mebbe—in case anyone dies—fer murder That'll be six months in jail and a fine of a hundred dollars Mebbe I better make it two hundred Now then—*[To TEXAS]* Have you got anything to say?

*Texas* I—I don't think you ort to sentence me that-a-way, Jedge—

*Judge* Why not?

*Texas* Well, I ain't got two hundred dollars—

*Judge* *[haughtily]* That ain't no excuse

*Texas* And you ain't got no jail

*Judge* Whut! Whut's the matter 'th the jail?

*Texas* *[abashed]* Well, I—I reckon a cyclone struck it

*Judge* D' you mean to tell me—! *[He jumps down from his dais, and hobbles rapidly to a window, and looks out He turns on NEB]* Whut'd you let him tear the roof offen yer jail fer!

*Neb* *[terrified]* I—I didden let him He jist done it, Jedge

*Judge* *[disgusted]* Didn't let him!

*Neb* And he wouldn't a-done it but—but he went and tied me up first

*Judge* Tied you up! Whut kind of a guard air you, anyway! Whut's the use of havin' a jail 'f you can't keep a feller in it?

*Neb* I don't know, Jedge

*Judge* *[apoplectic]* Don't know! Well, I know jist whut you c'n do, Neb Withers I'm gonna turn this prisoner over to you again, and if he gits away this time, you c'n serve his sentence and pay his fine

*Neb* *[miserably]* But, Jedge, they ain't no jail to keep him in

*Judge* *[grimly—going back to his desk]* Well, you'll jist have to keep him with out a jail, then

*Neb* But Jedge, I—I can't keep him with me 'f he doan wanta stay

*Judge* You got handcuffs, ain't you?

*Neb* Do I have to handcuff him to me?

*Judge* That would be a good idy

*Neb* But Jedge—I can't have *that*! I'm a married man!

*Judge* That don't make no difference!

*Neb* *[righteously]* Jedge, I know that ain't a-gonna be right

*Judge* Shet up!

*Neb* It ain't!

*Judge* Have you got a better idy 'n that, then? We got to do sump'n with him

*Neb* Well now—the marshal here ain't married

*Marshal* *[advancing on him, fiercely]* I'll break yore neck!

*[NEB snatches up his chair again]*

*Judge* *[pounding on his desk]* Order in the courtroom! *[A frowzy middle-aged giggling woman, looking as though she had dressed hastily, her hair stringy and uncombed, comes in at the door The men turn to look]* Oh, my God! Whutta you want in here, Miz Foster?

*Mrs Foster* *[gives a short high excited giggle, and slides into a chair]* Oh! It's a court, ain't it? Open to the public? I seen you all a-comin up the road, and thought I'd see whut you was up to, so early in the mornin' Is that the prisoner? Why, if 'tain't the same one you had here yistiddy! My, that big, strong un! Howd' do, Prisoner? Glad to see you back! *[She flutters a hand at him]*

*Judge* *[pounding on the desk]* Order in the courtroom!

*Mrs Foster* Don't you mind me, Jedge I ain't gonna be a mite of trouble Jist gonna scrouge down here and watch things You don't even have to think about me Jist go right on 'th yore jedgin' My brother that used to steal hogs alwys said, "They ain't no use in goin' up before Jedge Snodgrass, fer you're shore to git ninety days in the calaboose, wh'er you're guilty er not" Course he—

*Judge* *[outraged]* Order, I said!

*Mrs Foster* Course Davy was alwys guilty, Jedge I'll say *that* fer you! Looked like he jist couldn't keep his hands offa hogs I'll never fergit one time he seen a—

*Judge* *[pounding on the desk]* Miz Foster! 'F you don't shet up a-talkin' about hogs and things, you'll have to leave the courtroom!

*Mrs Foster* *[huffily]* Well, I must say!

I ain't interferin' 'th justice, am I? You'd think I was trvin' to, the way you talk—

Judge I didn't say you was interferin' I jst said *shet yer mouth!*

Mrs Foster Er I ain't tried to kick up no rumpus or nuthin' I jst come in and set down, and you go to jumpin' on me!

Texas [*going over toward her*] I beg your pardon, lady, but you're a-gettin the Judge all excited—and the more excited he gits, the harder it's a-gonna be on me So—d' you reckon you'd not say another word fer a minute er two, like a good girl, nen we'd appreciate hearin' yore voice again, a-soundin' like a gold trumpet, the way it does

Mrs Foster Why, Mr Prisoner! Whut a nice man you air! I hope they don't give you much of a sentence!

Texas Sh! Now then, Mr Judge, whut was you a-sayin' when this lady come in?

Judge [*snapping*] How'd I know? [*Reb-elliously*] 'F you think it's a cinch to run a court when people air alwys a-buttin' in—I

Texas [*placatingly*] Sure, I know it must be a hard job, all right I wouldn't have yore job fer nuthin'—

Judge [*belligerently*] Well, whut's the matter 'th my job, I'd like to know! 'F you don't stop a-criticizin' me, I ain't gonna hold court

Texas I ain't a-criticizin' you, Judge—

Judge Won't go on 'th the trial—I'll jst turn you a-loose and not have none, you don't stop a-makin' remarks—I

Texas That wouldn't be right, Judge, not to *try* me, now you *got* me here Jst a-wastin my time—

Judge [*sulking*] First everybody interrupts me, and now you go to sayin' you wouldn't have my job fer nuthin'—I

Texas But Judge, I only meant 'cause it was sich a *hard* job—

Judge Oh! Why didden you say so—I You all conspirin' again' me anyhow—I'm a good mind not to go on

Texas Aw, go on, Judge, nobody meant a form thing—

Judge Well, if they's any more a-blockin' of justice, I'm gonna jst walk out the door and not come back

Texas Nuthin' else is gonna block things, Judge You jst go right on a-jedgin'

Judge Well then Order in the courtroom! As I was a-sayin' when Miz Foster come a-buttin' in—

Marshal [*interrupting*] You wasn't a-sayin' anything, Jedge, it was *me*

Judge [*pounding*] Order, I said!

Marshal Neb here had been a-puttin' you up to handcuff this prisoner to me, and I'd jst said to Neb I'd break his neck And I will, too!

[*He glares at NEB*]

Neb You better keep yer dirty hands offa me!

Judge [*pounding*] Here, here! [*To TEXAS, wildly*] You see there, if 'tain't one thing it's another! Shet up, you two, quit it!

Marshal Beg yer pardon, Jedge, I'll shet up But if that little wart ever opens his head to me!—

Neb Don't you call me no little wart!

Judge [*fiercely*] Shet up!

[*There is a moment of silence, then*

HANNIE and the IKES rush in at the door HANNIE runs over to TEXAS at once]

Hannie Well, Godamighty, Texas! If you hain't a purty un! No gumption! I'm ashamed of you! [*To the MARSHAL, fiercely*] You let this man alone, you herr, or they'll be trouble! You had a lot to do anyway, breakin' in to our camp and makin' everybody stand around 'th their hands in the top of a sycamore tree!

[*The JUDGE, with icy rage, comes down from his desk and to everyone's astonishment, puts the gavel in HANNIE'S hand*]

Judge Here! You run this court, you're so smart! [*To the MARSHAL*] Mr Marshal I'm gonna git someone to fix the jail, and if you let this prisoner git away while I'm gone, I'll shore crown you when I git back!

[*He hobbles out angrily*]

Hannie Well, of all the— Whut's the matter 'th *that* ole mustard plaster? Whut'd he give me this here thing fer? Oh! That was the Jedge, wa'n't it? [*In high humor*] Well, you heared whut he said! "Run this court yerself," didn't he? That ud be a good un! I'd do it right! I'd tear up the courtrooms and burn down the jails I'd turn all the prisoners loose, let 'em run hog-wild I'd give 'em money, I'd show 'em the road That's the kinda jedgin' I'd do!

[*She goes toward the JUDGE'S stand*]

Marshal Now look out, you better stay down from there!

*Hannie.* I'd scalp all the guards, th'ow the marshals in the crick!

*Marshal* Git down from there, I told you!

*Hannie.* I'd burn all the law books, and start all over I'd tell nobody whur to stand, and nobody ud tell me whur to set!

*Marshal* [outraged] This hain't right, it hain't reg'lar! And if you don't shet up, I'll arrest you for contempt!

[*The IKES make a leap at him. The MARSHAL fumbles for his pistol. But he has forgotten all about TEXAS, in his anger, and turned his back on him. TEXAS quickly knocks the pistol out of his hand. The IKES jump on it, scrambling for it. The MARSHAL makes a jump for it, but is too late.*]

*Texas* [interfering] Here, shoot yerself, you crazies! Gimme that gun! [*One of the IKES hands it over.*] Well, damned if it hain't mine, anyway! I thought I reco-nized it! Whur's yer own pistol at?

*Marshal* [outraged] I'll fix you, ever damn one of you! I'll have the law on you!

[*The IKES snicker.*]

*Hannie* [pounding] Here, here! Is it the law you're talkin' about, Mr Marshal? Here's the law! This thing! A polished piece of post-oak a-poundin' on a holler piece of pine! That's the law!

[*The MARSHAL turns on his heel, disgusted, and starts toward the door.*]

*Texas* [covering him] Wait jist a minute! Do you want a piece of lead in yer left kidney? Whur you goin' in sich a hurry?

*Marshal* [sullenly] No place!

*Texas* Goin' after help, I reckon. You better set down here and behave yoreself [*Mrs FOSTER has risen, frightened to death, and is going toward the door.*] You, too, lady

*Mrs Foster* I want out!

*Texas* Set down [*She scurries back and sits down, close to the MARSHAL. NEB has snatched up his chair again, and stands shivering in the corner.*] Put that cheer down [*NEB puts it down reluctantly.*] You better set here by the marshal, too

[*NEB goes over and sits down. The IKES begin to jump up and down in crazy excitement.*]

*The IKES* Fight, fight, nigger and a white! Fight, fight, nigger and a—

*Texas* You, too! Shet up! [*They stop.*] Now then! [*He grins with delight.*] This is jist the kind of courtroom I like! The law—with its teeth pulled—and the prisoner with a shootin' arn! *This here is justice!* And I guess I better make the most of it while I'm able. It don't come to a feller often. Now I got my pistol back and my stren'th back. Now I'm myself again. I hadn't orter ever laid myself li'ble to the br'ars that scratch people like you-all. I'm savin' my blood—to make a worth-while river out of! I'm shore powerful glad to 've met you-all. And I don't wish you no more bad luck than the cholery morbus. See you all in hell!

[*He starts to go.*]

*Hannie* Jist a minute!

*Texas* Well?

*Hannie* Don't be in no hurry!

*Texas* [grimly] I've fooled around enough in these parts. It ain't healthy

*Hannie* Air you as blind 's a bat?

*Texas* I ain't got no time to waste a-answerin' fool questions. You've let me in fer enough now

*Hannie* [angrily] Me? Why, you over-grown razorback, I have?

*Texas* Yes, you

*Hannie* I'd like to know how!

*Texas* Now looky here. Not two hours ago, you got up on yer year, and told the marshal to tote me off to jail fer you couldn't stand me around! And that hain't all! Before *that*, you tuck sich a mean crack at me that I was knocked fer a barrel of staves, and didn't keer *whut* happened to me. Do you think I'd a-let that bastard of a marshal a-tuck me off so easy, if you hadn't gone and stuck a knife in me up to the handle!

*Hannie* Blamin' me, is that it?

*Texas* Blamn' you! I'd orter jerk yer hind leg off, and th'ow it in yer face!

*Hannie* Try it, and see how fur you git with it!

*Texas* Fer two cents I would. But I got better things to do, thank y' jist the same. So long to you! And be damned to you!

*Hannie* [levelly] If I tuck good aim, I could haul off and brain you 'th this here piece of wood they call the law

*Texas* [appalled] You're about the meanest womern I ever seen! First you git me in trouble, nen you want to brain me!

Hannie [coldly] I ast you a minute ago if you was blind 's a bat

Texas I don't pay no attention to fool questions

Hannie [with finality] That tells on you, Mr Texas Now I'm gonna give you a little advice 'fore you start out of here to scalp the state of Texas again Listen—when anybody asks you a fool question, it's worth a-lookin' into, fer it might mean sump'n That's all I got to say Now you c'n beat it

Texas [pausing] Am I as blind as a bat? Well, no, I ain't

Hannie You air, too

Texas I ain't!

Hannie You air!

Texas I ain't!

Hannie You air!

[HANNIE, furious, throws the gavel at him He picks it up, grinning]

Texas Now I guess I got the law on my side!

[HANNIE comes down from the desk, slowly]

Hannie Now then, you c'n do things fer yerself I'm th'ough with you I thought mebbe yer head wasn't quite as thick's a board Now I know it's thick 's the Rocky Mountains—and then some! You're as green as grass, and ignorant 's a blind goose in a thunder-storm You don't know two whoops about women, and whut you don't know about *anything* would make thirty million books full of close printin' When you first come along last night, I kinda tuck to you God knows why I didn't have more sense! I thought you stepped right off a mountain some'eres I thought you was full of shine like a scoured pot I thought if you set, the sun ud set Nen this mornin', when I heared you shootin' off yer head, I was mad as a settin' hen, fer about five minutes When I ast you jist now if you was blind 's a bat, I mighta knowed the answer! Course you're blind as a bat—blind as forty-seven bats! If you wasn't, you'd see I've hotfooted it clear here to Verdigrée, waded th'ough weeds and bresh and got chiggers on me all the way from my feet to whur I set down! And whut fer? To try to git a fool of a man outa trouble that's had a landslide in his head, and can't even remember who he's supposed to be! Now, git outa my way!

Texas [amazed] Hannie!

Hannie Don't you Hannie me!

Texas You can't leave here now!

Hannie Oh can't I? Move yerself away from that door

Texas Do you mean everthing you jist said?

Hannie Course I do, you fool! Includin' "Git away from that door, and let me outa here"

Marshal [jumping to his feet] I hain't a-gonna stand any more of this! I never seen sich goin'-on in a court of law! Makin' a fool outa me, and the courtroom, too! Blamed if I don't—

Texas [turning the pistol on him] Set down, and don't you move a eyelash, er I'll shoot it off

[HANNIE marches out the door]

Marshal Neb, you cowardy skeer-cat! 'F you had a little get-up and guts you wouldn't set there— Come on and help me, can't you?

Neb I—I—I can't he'p you none, Marshal I'm all crippled up now!

[The IKES make a running leap out the door]

Texas Here, here! [The MARSHAL advances on him] Git back there You heered me! Now you've made me let Hannie git away, you clumpin' fool! Couldn't you a-set still fer five more minutes!

[PAP and BUZZER run in]

Pap Hey, Texas! Thought mebbe they was shootin' you at sunrise! Mighta knowed they wouldn't be! Whur's Hannie goin' in sich a hurry?

Texas I don't know She gave me hell, and beat it.

Pap Give you hell? She must be crazy about you, to take so much trouble!

Texas [suddenly, struck by an idea] Hev, Pap! Do me a favor?

Pap Shore

Texas Take this here pistol, and hold the marshal here a while I got business to tend to! Here, take it!

Pap I—I— [Uncertainly] I don't know—I might shoot myself! Whut're you up to, anyway?

Texas Never mind, now! Tain't a-gonna hurt you none to he'p me out, is it? You hold the marshal here fer me a little bit, whutta you say?

Pap I don't want to go and git mixed up with the law that-a-way— It ain't safe

Texas In a hour, I'll be back and git you

outa here, I tell you! Come on, like a good feller! Thought you was my friend—

*Pap [weakening] Well, I—*

*Buzzey [breaking in] Don't you do it, Pap! Can't you see whut he's up to? He's gonna git Hanne and run plumb away with her, like I told you!*

*Texas Why, you little blue-faced ole buzzard, you! [He shoves the pistol into PAP's reluctant hand] And this, too [He forces the gavel on him] I jist wanta do sump'n Been a-wantin' to fer a long time! [He picks BUZZEY up, and shakes him briskly, like a dog shaking a rat] I ort to hurt you, but you're too damn little! [While he is shaking BUZZEY, the MARSHAL gives a leap and lands on TEXAS' back TEXAS drops BUZZEY, and shakes the MARSHAL off The MARSHAL springs at him again furiously, and TEXAS strikes him full on the jaw He goes over, knocked out cold] That'll take keer of you fer a little bit! Gimme my gun, gimme that thing, quick! [He grabs gun and gavel] I've spent entirely too much of my time in this neighborhood! It don't pay—!*

*[He dashes out the door]*

*Pap [staring after him, admiringly] My, I like that feller!*

### ACT THREE

*The roadside again, an hour or so later The sun has risen and a golden light slants in among the trees Mockingbirds, larks, sing in the branches The fire still burns, its smoke rising The IKES are sitting flat on the ground about ten feet apart, each with a hat full of blackberries picked from the roadside RED IKE has his mouth wide open and his head thrown back, BLACK IKE is throwing blackberries, one by one, at the yawning mouth*

*Red Ike [after several unsuccessful attempts] You can't hit me*

*Black Ike You can't ketch Open yer mouth*

*Red Ike It's open*

*Black Ike Wider [RED opens his mouth as wide as possible] Th'ow yer head back [RED does so] Shet yer eyes*

*Red Ike They're shet [BLACK takes careful aim this time, and is successful RED chews] 'S about time*

*Black Ike Open yer mouth [RED obeys*

*all instructions] Wider Th'ow yer head back Shet yer eyes Tight [He picks carefully among his berries, gets on his knees, leans forward and throws something in RED's mouth, and jumps back again, quickly] How's that un?*

*Red Ike [chewing] 'S all right, kinda sandy Holy—jumpin'—*

*[He shudders and spits desperately, trying to clear out his mouth]*

*Black Ike [grinning innocently] Whut's the matter?*

*Red Ike Anh, you've went and th'owed an ole stink bug in my mouth! [He jumps up, picking up his hat full of berries, and throws them wildly, hat and all, at BLACK who scrambles away and dashes off into the woods, snickering] Come back and fight You coward! I'll fix you! [He sits down again] I'll eat up all yer berries*

*[He begins to eat them out of BLACK's hat]*

*Black Ike [popping back in] Aw, I hain't had none yit*

*Red Ike I don't keer Th'owin' a stink bug down a feller's th'out*

*Black Ike Don't eat 'em all*

*Red Ike [smacking his lips] Shore good*

*Black Ike Red*

*Red Ike Well?*

*Black Ike I didn't know it was a stink bug*

*Red Ike Oh, you didn't?*

*Black Ike No, I didn't I thought it was a spider*

*Red Ike Oh! Well, that's all right, then Set down, and I'll hit you now*

*Black Ike [sitting down about five feet away and opening his mouth] Hit me, then*

*Red Ike [picking up a berry and throwing at the open mouth] There*

*Black Ike [chewing] Missed*

*Red Ike Missed, hell Open yer mouth [He throws again]*

*Black Ike [chewing] Missed again [He leans over, grabs a handful of berries and stuffs them into his mouth] I can't wait I'm too hongry*

*[HANNIE comes down the steps of the wagon She looks forlorn and distressed]*

*Red Ike [snatching up the berries] Here, don't eat 'em all up! Hanne ain't had none yit*

*[He gets up and holds them out to her]*

Hannie Whut is it?

Red Ike Blackberries

Hannie [*shaking her head*] No

Red Ike They're gooder'n any you ever saw Me'n Black found 'em side of the road

Hannie I don't want any

Red Ike You ain't had no breakfast a-tall

Hannie I ain't hongry

Black Ike [*coming forward*] Me'n Red'll go down here to that place the aidge of the woods, and swipe you some mushmelons, won't we, Red?

Red Ike Mushmelons and watermelons both

Hannie I told you I hain't hongry, and I mean I hain't hongry

Black Ike Aw, Hannie, 'tain't right not to eat Hey! We'll go and find you some eggs in that farmhouse down yander

Hannie [*with finality*] I don't want eggs I don't want no breakfast, and I'd thank you to shet up about it

Black Ike Oh! She'd thank you to shet up, Red

Red Ike Shet up, yerse'f

Hannie [*to herself*] I don't know whur he could be—

Red Ike How's that?

Hannie Did I say anything?

Red Ike You said, "I don't know whur he could be"

Hannie [*after a moment*] Well, I don't Go and see 'f you c'n find him anywhurs

Red Ike Texas? Why, last we seen of him, he was in the courtroom—

Hannie I ain't talkin' about Texas I'm talkin' about Pap

Red Ike Oh [*To Black*] She's a-talkin' about Pap She don't know whur he's at

Black Ike I ain't deaf

Hannie I'm a-gettin' right sick of this place, and the quicker we move from here, the better I'll like it You Ikes scout around and see 'f you can't find Pap He couldn't have went fur Quick's you find him, we'll beat it—and I hope to God I never come this-a-way again I'll be a-getherin' up things—

Black Ike Hain't you gonna wait and see 'f Texas comes?

Hannie Whut's Texas got to do with it?

Black Ike Well, I—

Hannie Nuthin' is the answer Now git on outa here

Red Ike Whut about Buzzey? Want us to find him, too?

Hannie I'd plumb fergot all about Buzzey!

Red Ike [*grinning, wisely*] That's whut I thought

Hannie Don't think so much, you'll rupture yerse'f

[*She begins gathering up pots and pans, and throwing them at, and into the wagon*]

Red Ike Come on, Black—

[*They start off*]

Hannie Don't ferget whut you're goin' after

Red Ike You hain't in a very good humor, air you?

Hannie [*snapping at him*] Shet up, 'f you don't like it

[*They go out She picks up a battered tin pan and throws it petulantly at the wagon*]

[*TEXAS comes in along the road, quickly*]

Texas Hannie [*She turns, sees him and, without a word, goes quickly toward the wagon steps*] You ain't runnin' away from me, air you, Hannie?

Hannie I doan know you from Adam

Texas Don't you do me that-a-way, Hannie

Hannie Whut a-way?

Texas Not havin' no words with me

Hannie I had plenty of words with you before I wish I never had

Texas [*seizing the opening*] Nen whyn't you play like you never seen me before? I jist come along the road this minute, see, and who do I spy but a purty womern all by her lonesome? Nice place you got here, lady

Hannie [*playing the game, but without amusement*] Thank you

Texas 'S a fairish mornin' 'th all them mockin' birds singin' in them ellums Heared lots of meaderlarks 's I come along, too

Hannie Yeah, they sing

Texas Purty How's all yer folks?

Hannie Dead, thank you

Texas [*with mock sympathy*] That's too bad Tyford fever?

Hannie The war in Cuby Rose-uvelt

Texas Oh!

Hannie You may think this is funny, but it's jist plain silly to me

*Texas [acquiescing]* That's whut I think  
*[Gravely]* Listen to me, Hannie I han't  
 got much time I got to talk to you I  
 never seen a womern like you in my life  
 You got me buffaloed complete I don't  
 know whe'r you like me or can't stand the  
 ground I walk on All I know is, we're  
 sump'n alike I've roamed all over and  
 never seen a womern before that was half  
 as crazy as me You're *twice* as crazy

*Hannie* Thank you

*Texas [with passion]* You're crazy and  
 reckless and wild So'm I You're walkin'  
 the earth temporary like you knowed  
 sump'n secret So'm I You don't belong  
 to nobody You make a feller wonder big  
 and step fur You got eyes and hair—*ever-*  
*thing* a little better'n the next womern, and  
 you suit me down to the ground. I git  
 awful lonesome bein' all by myself, and it  
 looks like you would

*Hannie [shortly]* I ain't all by myself

*Texas* Well, whut've you got? Yer Pap  
 fer comp'ny You go traveln' around—with  
 yer Pap—in that ole covered wagon all  
 fallin' to staves

*Hannie* I like to travel

*Texas* So do I And I'm pe'tickler who  
 I travel with

*Hannie* Air you invitin' me to travel  
 with you?

*Texas* I was headed in that direction

*Hannie [contemptuously]* Hunh  
 Whut'd I git out of it?

*Texas* Fun See things!

*Hannie* I been seen' things ever since  
 I was borned

*Texas* Camp in the heat of the day in  
 the shade!

*Hannie* That's whut me and Pap does

*Texas* Swim in the cricks! Watch it  
 git sun-up and sun-down! See lightnin',  
 hear thunder! Walk on the wind! Burn  
 yer tail-feathers on the sun! Feed natural,  
 sing strong, sleep together! Stop when you  
 feel like stoppin' Stay put when you feel  
 like stayin' put

*Hannie* Well, that's sump'n Pap's al-  
 ways in a hurry

*Texas* Well, Godamighty! They's more  
 fun than traveln' 'th yer old man

*Hannie* Is that so?

*Texas* I don't have to tell you that, do  
 I? When a feller travels, he wants to travel  
 all by hisself, er in some other kinda  
 comp'ny besides his relations A man—and

a womern to match him, that's the proper  
 idy!

*Hannie* Hunh If it's just a man I  
 wanted I could have Buzzey again The  
 fact is—I've made up my mind Buzzey  
 c'n have me Now you know

*Texas [blandly]* Will he travel?

*Hannie* Course he will

*Texas* Course he *won't* He'd want you  
 to set on his farm again, with yer hands  
 in yer lap—a-shellin' beans *[Disgusted]*  
 Hunh! A purty life! Buzzey— Good  
 God! You was so lonesome fer a man you  
 tuck up 'th the first thing that come along in  
 pants Buzzey, hunh? Old Empty Britches

*Hannie* He give me purty clothes He  
 was good to me

*Texas* Good to you? Go back to him,  
 then! 'F you went with me, I'd spank yer  
 tail 'f I felt like it

*Hannie [with passion]* And 'f I went  
 with you, I'd scratch yer face fer you reg'lar  
 —and fer good reason

*Texas [coming close]* I'd call you a  
 wench—and a hell of a goddamned womern!

*Hannie* I'd kick yer shins, and pull out  
 yer hair I'd blister you 'th my tongue  
 ever couple of days I'd cripple you—

*Texas* I'd hate you 'f you didn't! *[Pas-*  
*sonately]* Come on—go with me!  
 Wouldn't see another womern but you  
 Wouldn't *think* of another womern but you

*Hannie* Look out now—!

*Texas [as before]* You—you—all the  
 time, day in, day out! When it got night,  
 they'd be me and you, close together, d'  
 you hear me? Me—and you! Like it ort  
 to be! Like it was wrote down! Makes  
 me dizzy!

*Hannie [breathless]* Don't talk that-a-  
 way—

*Texas* You—in my arms! I'd make love  
 to you! Learn you sump'n you never  
 knowed about Kiss you the way you never  
 was kissed before—

*Hannie [responding, passionately]* Kiss  
 me, then—

*Texas* Hannie!

*[He seizes her in his arms and kisses  
 her]*

*Hannie [after a moment]* My God!

*[She pushes him away]*

*Texas [rapturously, passionately, his eyes  
 shut, swaying]* I'm blind! Lightnin's  
 struck! The world's ended! Kiss me!



Hannie [blind herself] Whur air you?  
[She finds him He kisses her, then  
holds her at arm's length]

Texas My God! The trees is smokin'!  
My feet's burnin'! Kiss me!

Hannie [backing out of his arms] Go  
'way, you wicked man! 'S too early in the  
mornin' fer this kind of talk! [As TEXAS  
makes a move toward her] Stay back there,  
now! 'F you tetch me, they'll be a murder!

Texas [going toward her, ecstatically] I  
knowed you was lyin' about Buzzey!

Hannie [backed up against the steps]  
Anh, it ain't safe here! I'm goin' in the  
wagon—[She starts up the steps] You better  
not foller me, neither! [She turns, tanta-  
lizingly] If you do foller me—I won't be  
responsible!

Texas Hannie!

[The IKES pop up from behind a bush,  
grinning]

The IKes Yanh, yanh! Hannie's got  
a feller! Hannie's got a feller!

Hannie [coming down the steps, fur-  
iously] God damn it, I told you to find  
Pap! [They pop back out of sight again,  
quickly] Texas! Quick, we got to be  
movin' from here! They'll git you again

Texas I'd fergot all about it!

Hannie I hadn't

Texas Well, am I goin' with you, er air  
you goin' with me?

Hannie I can't run off and leave Pap

Texas No, I reckon not! That means  
I'm goin' 'th you and Pap, then [Whistles]  
Holy Moses! Pap! You know whur Pap's  
at?

Hannie Whur?

Texas Last I seen of him he was in the  
courtroom Him and Buzzey both

Hannie The courtroom? Whut was Pap  
doin' there?

Texas Lookin' fer you, I reckon

Hannie The damned old fool! Now I  
bet he's got hisse'f in trouble Whut'm I  
gonna do, Texas?

Texas [starting] I'll go back and see  
about him, quick!

Hannie The marshal'll git you!

Texas Naw, sir, not me! You got it all  
wrong! This time, I'm gonna git the mar-  
shal!

[He starts out]

Hannie You mean it, Texas?

Texas [turning] Did you mean whut  
was a-goin' on when them IKes popped in

here jist now and ruint everthing? The  
way you looked at me and egged me on?  
Did you mean it—about bein' afear'd to  
have me clost to you, or you wouldn't be  
responsible whut happened?

Hannie I couldn't make that up,  
could I?

Texas [ecstatically] That's all I want to  
know, then! I'll drag Pap back here so  
quick he'll be winded fer hie Nen we'll all  
beat it from here, to God knows whur—and  
they'll be sump'n to make up songs about  
I been waitin' fer this day!

[He starts to go]

[The IKES run in again]

The IKes [breathless] Hev, Hannie!  
Texas!

Red Ike 'F we called Pap, mebbe he'd  
hear us and answer!

Black Ike Bet he's jist a-hidin' out  
some'eres! [Calling loudly] Pap! Oh—  
ho! Pap Pa-a-ap!

Texas Shet up, he can't hear you!

Red Ike [calling loudly] Pap Rader!  
Pap Rader! He-ey!

Hannie He hain't here nowhur, I tell  
you!

Red Ike Pa-a-ap! Ya-ay, Pap!

Hannie [furiously] Texas knows whur  
he is, caln't you hear nuthin'?

[Away off in the woods, there is an an-  
swering reply]

Voice Aye—aye—ah! I'm a-comin'!

Texas Listen!

Hannie Whut was that?

Texas [to the IKES] Holler again

Red Ike [calling] Pa-ap! Hey, Pap!

[They listen, breathless]

Voice [coming nearer] Yeah! I'm  
a-comin'!

Hannie [jubilantly] Hit's Pap, all right  
[To the IKES] Hitch up the team, quick!  
Put everthing in the wagon! Shake a leg!  
We're leavin' this place [The IKES dash  
out around the wagon] Here, Texas, he'p  
me pour out this warter, and put the kittle  
in the wagon!

[She rushes over to the pot TEXAS  
comes over]

Texas [banteringly, gaily] Git away  
from that kittle, you'll burn yerse'f! You're  
too hittle to lift it, anyway

Hannie Do it yerse'f, then!

Texas [calling out to the IKES] Hurry  
up, you IKes! Fasten them britchin' straps!  
Look out, the horses don't step on you!



Hannie. My goodness! my goodness!

[*She scurries about in absurd excitement and delight TEXAS puts the kettle in the wagon*]

[*PAP runs in, breathless, his clothes and face and hands scratched by the briars*]

Pap [*panting for breath*] Right of way fer the west-bound mail! Git outa my way, I can't stop! [*He runs around and around*] Oh, there you air, Texas! Knowed you'd be here! Lay back yer years like a jack-rabbit, and skedaddle

Hannie Pap, you crazy, what's the matter?

Texas Come on, Pap—we're bound fer the border!

[*PAP stops, puffing*]

Pap They hain't a minute behint me, I tell you! I give 'em the slip Buzzey—the marshal Hurry up, don't stand there!

Hannie Whut're you runnin' fer? 'D you see sump'n?

Pap The marshal and Buzzey and another feller Right on my heels! Beat it outa here, quick

Texas They comin' after me, is that it, Pap?

Pap [*nodding*] And ever one 'th a shootin' arn a yard long!

Texas Well, whyn't you say so in the first place? Come on! The Ikes is hitchin' up the team We got everthing else—Don't stand there!

Pap My, oh, my! I got to be on the move, too I'm a crimernal myself now, like you Yes, sir They'll arrest us both if they ketch us again!

[*He seizes TEXAS by the arm and starts hurrying him along toward the wagon*]

Texas [*thoughtfully*] Hey! I jist thought of sump'n! You come ahead to warn me, is that it, Pap?

Pap That's the idy

Texas That's right nice of you, Pap

Pap Come on now, they hain't fur behind

Texas I ain't goin'

Pap [*thunderstruck*] You ain't goin'?

Hannie Texas!

Pap Well, Godamighty, whut're you up to now? Gonna give yerself up the way you done before, is that it?

Texas [*firmly*] I ain't goin'

Pap Well, thunderation! And here I've run my hind legs off!

Texas Listen—you been in enough trou-

ble a'ready on my account They'll arrest you—fer comin' to warn me I can't have that, Pap You and Hannie and the Ikes jump in the wagon and fly fer dear life I'll stay here That'll give you a chance to get away

Hannie You want us to leave you here, is that it?

Texas This here law a-gittin' after me is happenin' entirely too reg'lar to suit me Gittin' t'ard of it I'll jine you up here by Sweetwater Crick, in a coupla days Quick 's I c'n git there

Hannie Whut makes you so blamed sure you'll git there—with three men-a-comin' after you 'th shootin' arns? Whut're you aimin' to do?

Texas I don't know whut I'll do, but I'll do sump'n—

Hannie Thundermug! I won't have it [*Decisively*] If they's gonna be any stayin', I'm gonna stay right here with you

Texas Hannie you mean it? I don't think I'd ort to let you—

Pap Hannie, now it tain't safe—them fellers might—

Hannie [*her eyes on TEXAS*] I hain't a-gonna let him outa my sight, I tell you They don't grow on trees You and the Ikes shake yer tails, 'f you want to

Pap [*insulted*] I hain't a-gonna shake my tail, no sich of a thing

Hannie Well, looks like we're all a-stayin' The Ikes won't budge 'thout me Whut you gonna do, Texas? You hain't gonna give yerself up?

Texas [*sitting down thoughtfully by the fire*] I hain't decided

Hannie Gonna fight 'em all bare-handed?

Texas I might

Hannie Gonna shoot it out?

Texas 'F I take a notion

Hannie [*worried*] You got yer pistol, hain't you?

Texas [*reaching for it*] Yeah Got my pistol—and this thing, too

[*He draws the gavel out of his belt*]

Pap [*coming over and sitting down*] Whut's that thing?

Texas Don't you know? This thing represents the law [*He drops it in the fire He grns*] Now then Seem' 's how we're jist a-waitin'—you might tell us whut happened, Pap So we'll know whut to expect—

Pap [*rapidly*] A plenty happened After the marshal came to life again, Buzzey says he'd see to it, *personal*, that they got *you*, Texas Take the marshal to whur you was at, and help put the handcuffs on you

Texas Well, that was nice of him

Pap And he give the marshal twenty-five dollars to help him make up his mind to say "Yes"

Texas Good ole Buzzey!

Pap So I give a dash around the blacksmith shop into a plum thicket, and here I am!

Texas And then three—all broke out 'th shootin' arns—was right at yer heels, is that right?

Pap I'd hate to tell you how clost! [*He looks round at the woods*]

Texas Hey! I got a idy We'll give 'em a welcomin' salute! [*He turns around with a grin*] You see that leaf—on the tip end of the top branch of that oak tree?

[*He points jubilantly, with suppressed excitement*]

Pap That green un?

Texas Yeah

[*He pulls out his pistol, takes careful aim, and fires*]

Pap Hit, by God!

Texas [*with a wide grin*] Clipped it off clean! That ort to worry 'em quite a lot

[*He puts his pistol back in the holster, and from here on, his air of amused, almost ecstatic confidence never leaves him* The IKES run in wildly]

The IKes Who's that a-shootin'?

[*They stop short*]

Black Ike Why, 'f here ain't Pap! Howdy, Pap, thought you was dead!

Pap Come on over here and I'll tell you sump'n [*The IKES come over obediently, and sit down*] You know whut we're a-doin'?

Red Ike No

Pap We're just a-settin' here waitin' to git arrested [*The IKES look baffled*] Yes, sr, that's it We've all made up our minds that travelin' on the road ain't no fun So we're gonna give it up, and go to house-keepin' in the Verdigrée jail Ain't that right, Hannie?

Hannie [*shortly*] Shet up, I'm thinkin'

Pap [*to the IKES*] She says, "Yes" [*He grins*] Hannie and Texas here is crazy about

each other, 'd you know that? Ain't that so, Hannie?

Hannie Well, for God's sake, Pap—

Pap [*to the IKES*] Whut'd I tell you?

Texas [*with visionary delight*] In half a hour, we'll cross Little Spunky, by noon we'll hit Tulsy, in five days we'll all be in Texas—

Pap Hunh! In five *minutes* we'll all be dead

Texas [*grinning at him*] Suit yerself, Pap

Pap [*petulantly*] You take it awful light, I must say

Texas [*visionary again, absorbed*] Here we set—all hands idle—and a cyclone with shootin' pistols let loose after us In them woods, walks the forces of the law, their teeth clamped and their heads not easy But the roads we're goin' on don't end no-whurs—till we end 'em ourselves And they's gonna be plenty of hell-let-loose—as well as settin' quiet in fence jambs—afore we do Ain't that right, Hannie?

Hannie Whutever you say, Texas

Pap [*annoyed*] Blamed if can make ary one of you-uns out! You talk plumb silly to me

Texas [*grinning*] That's jist the way everbody else's talk sounds—to us, Pap!

[*Through the bushes at the back, appear BUZZEY, NEB, and the MARSHAL They have tied the MARSHAL's white handkerchief on a stick, and BUZZEY is carrying it above his head, the others huddling close as if for protection*]

Buzzey We—we—we hain't a-gonna hurt nobody—

Pap [*after a surprised stare*] How's that?

Buzzey I say—we hain't a-gonna hurt nobody

Pap Oh! [*To the others*] He haint a-gonna hurt nobody Well, whut you got that white rag on a stick fer?

Buzzey Tam't no white rag It's the marshal's hankuchief

Pap Oh That makes it different

Buzzey We didn't want nobody a-shootin' at us, 'cause we hain't a-gonna shoot at nobody

Marshal [*interrupting*] We come here peaceable—to talk things over

Neb [*butting in*] We heared a shot and we thought mebbe we better—

*Marshal* Shet up, Neb! [*To PAP*] Is it all right to talk things over?

*Pap* Why, talk till you git the lockjaw, fer all I keer. Only don't use no rough talk—'cause my daughter is here, and she hain't used to it—

*Hanne* [*impatiently*] God damn it, Pap, shet up—

*Marshal* How'd do, Mr Texas?

*Texas* [*after a moment, looking at him*] Howd' do

*Marshal* You see how it is—we hain't a-meanin' harm to no one

*Texas* Yeah, I see how it is.

*Marshal* [*releved*] We hoped you'd do that

*Texas* Set down, why don't you?

*Marshal* Might do that [*They all sit down, BUZZEY first having stuck the stick with its white handkerchief in the ground*] Well, I—s fine weather, ain't it?

*Pap*. Looks like rain

*Marshal* Yeah, looks like rain. We need it, though

*Pap* Always need rain.

*Marshal* Yeah, always need it when we hain't got it. When it do start, it don't rain, it pours

*Pap* Pitchforks and nigger babies

*Marshal* Ever time. Well, we can't complain

*Pap* We c'n complain—but that's all the good it does

*Marshal* [*with a loud nervous laugh*] Yeah, that's right. Ain't that right, Mr Hale?

*Buzzey* [*joining in, nervously*] Heel! Heel!

*The Ikes* [*bursting out*] Haw! Haw!

[*They rock with hysterical excitement*]

*Pap* [*to the Ikes*] Goldurn it, that ain't no joke!

[*They subside*]

*Marshal* [*feeling that the ice is broken*] Well, well. Reminds me of one time I was farmin' over by Tahlequah and it come a big hail storm in the night—

*Texas* [*breaking in*] Is that whut you wanted to talk over, Mr Marshal? 'D you come all the way here like a bat outa thunder to tell us about a hail storm?

*Marshal* Why, just a little friendly talk—

*Texas* Friendly snappin' turtles! Whut'd you want, anyway?

*Marshal* [*jerking out a pistol*] Put yer hands up! That's whut I want [*He*

*stands up, quickly, covering TEXAS with the pistol* NEB and BUZZEY jerk out pistols and cover TEXAS with them. The three back away a little so as to keep the whole group in sight] Put 'em up

*Texas* [*lazily*] My hands?

*Marshal* And be quick about it!

*Texas* I knowed they was a ketch to it [*He puts his hands up, casually, not the least bit perturbed*]

*Pap* Now, goldurn it, you said you wasn't gonna hurt nobody!

*Marshal* Shet up! And keep outa this

*Pap* [*disgusted*] White hankuchief on a stick, huh?

*Marshal* [*to TEXAS*] Now I guess you'll come along peaceable, er git yerself riddled 'th bullets. Neb, take his gun away from him

*Texas* [*casually*] I don't think I'd come too clost, Neb, 'f I was you

*Marshal* Git it, Neb, I told you!

[*NEB advances cautiously*]

*Texas* [*with cool deadly meaning*] Onct a feller tried to take a gun away from me, and I didn't want him to have it. They wouldn't no one bury him, the varmint. Laid on the ground till he rotted

*Neb* [*anxiously*] You got him covered, hain't you, Marshal?

*Texas* [*coolly, directly to NEB*] How's yer cripples, Neb? Glad to see yer leg hain't broke. I'd take keer of myself 'f I was you [*Fiercely*] Take keer of yerself, I said!

[*NEB scurries back out of reach*]

*Marshal* God damn it, you blistern' coward! Whut good air you?

*Neb* My legs is a-painin' me turnble,

*Marshal* I hain't all here, can't you see it?

*Marshal* Christ! Mr Hale, go and git that gun offa him

*Texas* Oh, Mr Hale, 's I live and breathe! Come and shake hands 'th me, Buzzey

*Buzzey* [*hesitantly*] Why, I—you keep yer hands up in the air

*Texas* I jist wanted to say "Hello" Hain't saw you in so long

*Buzzey* [*to the MARSHAL*] You make him keep his hands up, Marshal

*Marshal* Git his gun, like I told you

*Buzzey* [*worried*] You got him covered, hain't you, Marshal?

[*He advances*]

*Marshal* Yeah, and hurry up

*Texas* Come a little closter, Buzzey, and lemme make up fer lost time

*Buzzey* I hain't a-skeered of you

*Marshal* 'F you tetch Mr Hale, I'll shoot and shoot quick

*Buzzey* [worried] You'll look out whur you shoot, won't you, Marshal?

*Marshal* I won't miss whut I aim at

*Buzzey* Nen I'll shore take his gun from him—don't you worry about that!

*Texas* Hannie, somebody's went and done me dirt, and I wonder if it hain't Buzzey I wonder if it wouldn't be worth git-tin' shot jst to git even And while I think of it, I bet it was *his* idy to come in here under a white flag and make out this was gonna be a nice quiet pie supper 'th love and kisses

*Buzzey* [jeering] It was my idy, Mr Texas When I heared that shot!

*Texas* Well, all I c'n say at this important minute of my life, is this To them that does dirt, dirt shall be done Ain't that right, Hannie?

*Hannie* [her eyes blazing] Dirt and a plenty!

*Texas* Whut'll I do—set f'ar to him?

*Hannie* He ain't worth it!

*Texas* Want me to shoot him? Skin him alive? Tie him up to a tree and let the coyotes chew on him?

*Hannie* Nuthin' like that! Don't you lift a finger, Texas!

*Texas* What! And let him git away with his sneakin' onneriness?

*Hannie* Naw, sir! He ain't gonna git away with nuthin'! [She hitches up a sleeve, turns toward Buzzey, and speaks with slow and deadly deliberation.] You c'n leave Buzzey to me

[BUZZEY, who has advanced, takes a quick step backward]

*Buzzey* Why, Hannie—why whutta you—?

*Hannie* [as before] Come and take his gun off of him, Buzzey Sich a nice gun! Whutta you standin' there fer?

*Buzzey* [frightened] Hannie, I—well, fer land's sake, I ain't wantin' no gun!

*Marshal* [severely] Go and git that gun!

*Buzzey* N-Naw, sir! I woulden tetch it —'th a ten-foot pole!

*Marshal* [with outraged indignation] Well, Christamighty! Skeered wall-eyed by a weak womern!

*Buzzey* That womern hain't weak I know her I hain't a-gonna fool 'th her

*Marshal* Well! [With biting contempt.] Seem' as how you've lost yer manhood—I reckon it's up to me My business is to uphold the law, and I'm gonna do it I ort to arrest you fer lyn' to me Here I went and deputized you—give you a gun and ever-thing—and you go and lay down on me Gimme that gun back!

*Buzzey* Nanh, I'm afeared you'll shoot me!

*Marshal* [contemptuously] I wouldn't spit on you

*Buzzey* [reheved] Here, then

[He hands the pistol back The MARSHAL puts it in his holster]

*Marshal* Now then, Mr Texas, I guess it's up to me to git that gun Neb, keep yer gun on these others to see they don't interfere

*Neb* I guess mebbe I c'n do that, Mr Marshal

*Texas* [easily] I'm shore sorry it had to be you, Mr Marshal You're the only white man in the whole shootin' match But 'fore you take it, I wanta tell you sump'n Nen you c'n have it

*Marshal* Well, make it quick

*Texas* [carefully] You know, I've made you a powerful sight of trouble

*Marshal* You damn right, you have!

*Texas* Well, that's the way I am! Hain't it turrible! I'm a peaceable man enough, 'f people ud le' me alone 'F they don't, why I beat up folks right and left and make nuthin' but trouble fer 'em Git put in jail, git myself outa jail. Make marshals spend all their time a-tryin' to keep their hands on me You know how a eel is, shp-pery and hard to handle? That's me A slippery eel with a shootin' arn Full of trouble Can raiser and Hell bender And so on Mr Marshal, whut I'm gettin' at is this if you take me back to Verdigrée again, whut does it git you?

*Marshal* [grimly] I'll have you whur I want you

*Texas* Whur is that?

*Marshal* Whur they put eels

*Texas* Whur is that?

*Marshal* In jail

*Texas* [grinning] That don't make sense They put eels in vinegar

*Marshal* Sense or no sense, it's jail fer you.

*Texas* [blandly] I won't be there long, you ort to know that

*Marshal* We'll see about that

*Texas* [with calculated guile] Fu'thermore, I—I'm sorry to mention it—but somebody might git hurt Never c'n tell when I git mad [To HANNIE, as if he'd just remembered it] Hannie! You shore missed it! [With delight] Who'd you reckon I slugged in the jaw back there in the courtroom!

[The MARSHAL involuntarily puts his hand to his jaw]

*Hannie* [delighted] The marshal!

*Texas* Yes, sir—the law!

*Hannie* Hard?

*Texas* Sledge hammer!

*Hannie* Worse'n a mule kick, I bet!

*Texas* Two mules

*Hannie* [with huge delight] Wisht I'd a-been there! 'S turrible to miss all the purty sights! [Struck with an idea] Hey, but Texas! [Indicating the MARSHAL] Show me how you done it!

*Texas* [grinning] Aw, he wouldn't like it

*Hannie* Go on, he wouldn't keer! Anyway—he wouldn't know nuthin'—after it happened

*Marshal* [with offended dignity] Will you two quit turnin' yer backs on me like I wasn't here?

*Texas* [grinning at the MARSHAL] Beg yer pardon I did hit you a whack on the jaw, though, I'm afeard

*Marshal* You damn right you did!

*Texas* Well! Whurever I am, they's trouble Follers right at my heels, jist like a shadder Me—then trouble Jist that close!

*Marshal* I guess I'll take my chances on that

*Texas* All right, then [He stands up, belligerently] Cart me off to yer old jail!

*Marshal* I'll do that

*Texas* [amused] It don't make no difference to me Take me! I have me a good time purt' near anywhur The truth is, I was borned on the side of the road, and I like to stay there [Confidentially, glowingly, to HANNIE, ignoring the MARSHAL again] I like to walk fur, and to cut up jake, and let my lungs out considerable

*Hannie* [responding, oblivious of everyone else] I know you You like to stick

out yer hand, and tetch yand' side of a river

*Texas* [as before] Like to stand 'th my feet on a horse's rump and my head stuck up over a cloud! Lake to walk on the hills that no one can locate!

*Marshal* [indignantly] Jist ferget I'm here, why don't you!

*Texas* [unheeding] Any kind of walls jist gits in my way sump'n turrible! [He turns to the MARSHAL] You see, I'm one kind of thing—and you and yer law is another'n But go on—take me! Course—if I was a-runnin' things, I'd keep you and me separated

*Buzzey* [breaking in, alarmed] Look out, Mr Marshal, he'll talk you out of it!

*Marshal* [angrily] Well, I hain't noticed you a-doin' nuthin'! [To TEXAS] I ain't gonna let you go, that's all they is to it I ain't goin' back to Verdigree without you!

*Texas* [blandly] 'D you have to go back to Verdigree?

*Marshal* Course I do!

*Texas* Why is that?

*Marshal* 'Cause I'm a marshal there, that's why!

*Texas* [turning to HANNIE] Whyn't he give up marshalin'? I heared him say this mornin' he was gittin' mighty t'ard of it

*Hannie* Whut'd he do? Marshalin's a good job

*Texas* I've saw people that was better at it

*Hannie* Whut's the matter 'th his marshalin'?

*Texas* He's too good a man to marshal He ort to go back to farmin' It tain't so excitin', but it's decenter Nen he wouldn't have to go on associatin' 'th the crimernal classes—like me Why, some day—you know whut'll happen to the marshal?

*Hannie* Whut?

*Texas* [with tense exaggeration, visualizing it] Some day, he'll start to arrest a feller—a mean un! Come up clost to him and start to put the handcuffs on him And that feller'll reach out—like a cat—like this, see?—and grab him! Claw him to ribbons! Tie his arms in a hard knot!

*Hannie* [catching his excitement] Jump on him 'th hob-nails!

*Texas* Break his legs!

*Hannie* Cut off his years!

Texas Crack his ribs! They'll be blood all over him like a stuck hog! Nen that feller'll slowly draw out a gun and shoot the marshal six times! [Turning toward the MARSHAL] Kill you dead, that's whut he'll do! Kill you dead!

Marshal [in alarm, stepping back] You keep yore hands offa me!

Texas You don't want me, Mr Marshal! You don't want me

Marshal [baffled] No?

Texas [throwing up his hands, ecstatically] There! I knowed you'd come to yer senses! Good old Marshal! Come on folkses, the marshal says it's all right! Hey, you Ikes, come and help me with the team!

[TEXAS and the IKES dash out around the wagon HANNIE runs over and thumps the MARSHAL on the chest, delightedly]

Marshal [protesting, weakly] Here, here—I never said you could go! Here, you!

Buzzey [furiously] God damn it don't you let that eternal go! I'll have the law on you!

Marshal [turning on him fiercely] Shet up! Don't you go and tell me whut to do! I guess I know whut I can do—and can't do!

Buzzey Hain't you gonna take him back?

Marshal [fiercely] If I don't—that's my business, and you keep out of it, you hear? It's good riddance—a clear ease of it—that's whut it is! [Weakly, remembering his fright] I ort to know!

Hannie [turning on BUZZEY] You little trouble-makin' baboon! Come here 'th a white flag, will you, and try to sneak up on Texas that-a-way?

Buzzey But Hannie—

Hannie [relenting] Oh, I know All on account of me, wasn't it? Damned 'f I don't feel sorry fer you, purt' near Listen, Buzzey—I hain't yore kind, hain't you found that out by this time? You go and find yerself another womern

[She starts putting things in the wagon]

Buzzey [miserably] I—I don't want no other womern but you

Hannie Fiddlesticks! The woods is full of 'em Sorry, Mr Marshal, I gotta have that stool A womern's a womern—'cept that some of 'em is plumb nice—and I hain't You go and find you a nice womern, Buzzey—one that's house-broke

Texas [coming back in, jubilantly] Team's ready! Ramin' to step! Pile in, Hannie! Less'n you're goin home with Buzzey

Hannie [grinning, as she goes toward the wagon] I don't know him from Adam!

Texas [looking into her eyes] Do you know me from Adam?

Hannie [cryptically] No

Texas No?

Hannie [smiling, with deep feeling] As far as I'm concerned—you air Adam!

[TEXAS lifts her into the wagon PARRY jumps in, also. The IKES dash in, ecstatically]

The IKES Wild and reckless, borned in Texas!

[They put the stepping boxes in the wagon]

Buzzey [mournfully] Hain't you a-goin' back with me, neither, Red—you and Black?

Red Ike [brightly] Don't—know you

Black Ike Never seen you before in all of our borned days!

[They smile with delight and dash off BUZZEY goes and sits down by the fire, no longer gone]

Texas [about to get in the wagon] Good luck, Mr Marshal! Keep outa trouble!

Marshal You better bent it 'fore I change my mind

Texas Jist a minute!

[He goes over and with the toe of his shoe kicks the charred gavel out of the fire He picks it up, offering it to the MARSHAL]

Marshal Whut's that?

Texas [with a wide grin] That's the law Don't you reco'nize it? We hain't got a mite of use fer it Take it Course—it's kinda hot—and a little burnt on one end

Marshal [evasively] I—I got my hands full

Texas Back she goes, then! [He throws it back in the fire, jumps in the wagon beside HANNIE, quickly The IKES can be heard shouting excitedly to the team "Whoa! Whoa, back!" The wagon backs a little, creaking and swaying] Hey! Put that far out, will you, Buzzey? Good-bye, you all! I bet you wish you was us!

[A whip cracks The wagon plunges off into the woods The IKES begin to

*shout jubilantly, tauntingly "Wild and reckless, borned in Texas! Suckled by a bear!"—The hound yaps with excitement]*

*[The MARSHAL looks down the road*

*after them A slow admiring grin comes over his face He plucks his handkerchief off the stick and begins to wave]*

THE END

# THE INFERNAL MACHINE

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

By JEAN COCTEAU

*Translated from the French by CARL WILDMAN*



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London*

## JEAN COCTEAU AND THE EXPERIMENTAL THEATER IN FRANCE

JEAN COCTEAU was born in a small village near Paris in 1891. Reasonably precocious as a youth (he printed his first volume of poems in 1909) he evaded the jinx usually associated with child prodigies to become one of the most thoroughly rounded men of art in contemporary society. By turns, he has worked hard and successfully at the writing of verse, plays, and novels, at choreography, at painting, at film direction, at criticism. And his success in such diverse fields of the theatre as circus, ballet, tragedy, pantomime, fantasy, and romance has given the lie to the ancient canard about the jack-of-all-trades. "Art must satisfy the Nine Muses," he once declared, and in his practice he has done his best to give such satisfaction.

His first writing was strongly influenced by French classical authors, but his introduction about 1914 to Andre Gide freed him from the compulsion to imitate and set him to seeking more personal methods of communication. Specifically, Cocteau embarked upon an ambitious program of rescuing the French theatre, at all costs, from the "literary" drama—that is to say, realism and the problem play. Literature, he felt, had completely captured the stage and turned her legitimate collaborators out of doors. The French theatre was the slave of pettifogging realism, rotten with literature. Plays could be read with as great pleasure as they could be seen. "A great literary masterpiece," he said, "is but a dictionary in disorder." And he decided that the theatre should provide, instead, the excitement of drama and the exhilaration of ritual. It became his intention to explore the resources of the drama itself, ignoring the "new" form of literary drama in favor of the beauty which could exist only on the stage itself, on the boards.

To this end, to the re-creation of "pure theatre," he joined forces with Serge Diaghileff's Ballet Russe and the composer Erik Satie to produce *Parade* in 1917. From ballet, he turned even nearer to first principles with *Le Bœuf sur le Toit*, created for the Fratellini troupe of circus clowns in 1920. With such a start, it is hardly surprising that experiment has been the characteristic of his dramatic career, whether it be such revisions of Greek tragedy as *Antigone* (1922), romantic melodrama, *L'Angé à deux Têtes* (1946), "farce," *Les Parents Terribles* (1939), or monologue, *La Voix Humaine* (1934). Throughout his career he has worked closely with specialists in other fields of art—the modern composers, Poulenc, Honegger, Stravinsky, Satie, Milhaud, painters, Picasso, Bérard, and actor-managers, Louis Jouvet, Charles Dullin.

It is perhaps necessary for the student to rescue Cocteau from his commentators and disciples, for he has become something of a cult. He has been called a dadaist, a surrealist, and a symbolist. Actually he is none of these with any consistency. For example, an early critic declared him to be a part of "The light cavalry of the modern revolt against romanticism," a statement which Cocteau has completely refuted with his exercise in romanticism, *L'Angé à deux Têtes*. Quite simply, Cocteau's importance lies in his serious endeavor to extract the limit of effect from what is uniquely the art of the theatre, the art which involves actors, scenery, and *action*. He has attempted to de-emphasize both the suspense of "what happens next," the characteristic of narrative, and the color of imagery, the characteristic of poetry. Imagery, he feels, should be in the action of the play. As for action, he is concerned with depth, not breadth.

It was only natural that a man with such a theory of the theatre should turn to the familiar myths and legends of the Greeks, as he has in *The Infernal Machine*. Since the stories involve neither everyday problems nor surprise endings, and the audience would know, for example, what happened to Oedipus, there would be no "sweaty excitement" about the culmination of the play. With almost the detachment of the gods, therefore, the audience could relax and observe the process of the event—*how* it happened, rather than *what* happened next. To further his ends, he employs in *The Infernal Machine* a superhuman Voice to quell any curiosity the audience might have about the final fate of the hero.

In the play itself, apart from the choral pronouncements of the Voice, Cocteau uses symbols to reveal the characters and visions of his principal actors. It is to be noted

that these are, in the main, theatrical symbols, presented in the action or the staging of the play, not in its poetry. A particular kind of formal stage is called for, the colors of the set and the lighting are specified, and the few properties are heavy with significance. The result is a kind of psycho-analytical tragedy with the universal implications all too frequently absent from the realistic problem play. *The Infernal Machine* is a dramatization in terms of the contemporary theatre of the Oedipus complex treated as an aspect of humanity. The student should consider with greatest care the implications of the setting of Act Three, for instance, its relationship to the plot as a whole, and to the behavior of the actors in that particular scene. The elaboration of psycho-analytical symbolism in the first three acts gives the familiar tragedy of Act Four a painful and human meaning. It becomes a tragedy which the contemporary audience can share with the audience of some two thousand years ago. The play makes poignant the tragic aspects of our common nature, which is, perhaps, what Cocteau means when he declares, "I rehabilitate the commonplace."

*The Infernal Machine* was first produced at the Théâtre Louis Jouvet, Paris, April 10, 1934. In the cast were Jean-Pierre Aumont as Oedipus, Pierre Renoir as Tiresias, Jouvet as the Shepherd, Cocteau as the Voice, and Marthe Régnier as Jocasta. It was later produced in London, at the Gate Theatre in Dublin, and in America by Vassar, Harvard, and the New York Play Room Club.

#### CHARACTERS

- 1 THE VOICE
- 2 THE YOUNG SOLDIER
- 3 THE SOLDIER
- 4 THE CHIEF, *their captain*
- 5 JOCASTA, *the queen, widow of Laius*
- 6 TIRESIAS, *a soothsayer, nearly blind*
- 7 THE PHANTOM OF LAIUS, *the dead king*
- 8 THE SPHINX
- 9 ANUBIS, *Egyptian God of the Dead*
- 10 THE THEBAN MATRON
- 11 A LITTLE BOY
- 12 A LITTLE GIRL
- 13 OEDIPUS, *son of Laius*
- 14 CREON, *brother of Jocasta*
- 15 THE MESSENGER FROM CORINTH
- 16 THE SHEPHERD OF LAIUS
- 17 ANTIGONE, *daughter of Oedipus*

# THE INFERNAL MACHINE

## ACT ONE

### THE PHANTOM OF LAIUS<sup>1</sup>

*The Voice* "He will kill his father He will marry his mother" To thwart this oracle of Apollo, Jocasta, Queen of Thebes, leaves her son on the mountain-side with his feet pierced and bound A shepherd of Corinth finds the nursing and carries it to Polybius Polybius and Merope, king and queen of Corinth, were bemoaning a sterile marriage The child, Oedipus or *Pierced-feet*, respected by bears and wolves, is to them a heaven-sent gift They adopt him

When a young man, Oedipus questions the oracle of Delphi

The god speaks *You will murder your father and marry your mother* He must therefore fly from Polybius and Merope The fear of parricide and incest drives him on towards his fate

One evening, arriving at the cross-roads of Delphi and Daulis, he meets an escort A horse jostles him, a quarrel starts, a servant threatens him, he replies with a blow from his stick The blow misses the servant and kills the master This dead man is Laius, the old king of Thebes Parricide!

The escort, fearing an ambush, took to its heels Oedipus, unsuspecting, passed on Besides, he is young, enthusiastic, this accident is soon forgotten

During one of his halts, he learns of the scourge of the Sphinx The Sphinx, "the Winged Virgin," "the Singing Bitch," is killing off the young men of Thebes This monster asks a riddle and kills those who do not guess it Queen Jocasta, widow of Laius, offers her hand and her crown to the conqueror of the Sphinx

Like the young Siegfried to come, Oedipus rushes on He is consumed with curiosity and ambition The meeting takes place What was the nature of this meeting?

<sup>1</sup> The four scenes should be planted on a little platform in the center of the stage surrounded by nocturnal curtains The slope of the platform varies according to the requirements of the scenes Besides the lighting of details the four acts should be flooded in the livid mythical light of quicksilver

Mystery Be that as it may, Oedipus enters Thebes a conqueror, he marries the queen Incest!

For the gods really to enjoy themselves, their victim must fall from a great height Years come and go in prosperity Two daughters and two sons complicate the monstrous union The people love their king But the plague suddenly descends upon them The gods accuse an anonymous criminal of infecting the country and demand that he shall be driven out From one discovery to another, and as if intoxicated by misfortune, Oedipus, in the end, finds himself up against the wall The trap shuts All becomes clear With her red scarf, Jocasta hangs herself With the golden brooch of the hanging woman, Oedipus puts out his eyes

Spectator, this machine, you see here wound up to the full in such a way that the spring will slowly unwind the whole length of a human life, is one of the most perfect constructed by the infernal gods for the mathematical destruction of a mortal

*A patrol path round the ramparts of Thebes High walls A stormy night Summer lightning The din and bands of the popular district can be heard*

*The Young Soldier* They're having a good time!

*The Soldier* Trying to

*Young Soldier* Well, anyway, they dance all night

*Soldier* They can't sleep, so they dance

*Young Soldier* All the same, they're getting tight and going with women, and spending their nights in night clubs, while I'm tramping up and down with you Well I, for one, can't stand it any longer! I can't stand it! I can't! D'you see? That's flat I can't stand it any longer

*Soldier* Desert

*Young Soldier* Oh! no I've made up my mind I'm going to put my name down for the Sphinx

*Soldier* What for?

*Young Soldier* What do you mean? Why, to do something, of course To put

an end to this nerve-racking business and this ghastly inaction

*Soldier* Out of a stew into a funk

*Young Soldier* Funk?

*Soldier* Yes, just that funk I've seen brighter and sturdier lads than you who got the wind up Unless the gentleman wishes to down the Sphinx and draw the first prize

*Young Soldier* And why not, after all? The only man to come back alive from the Sphinx became an idiot, I know But supposing what he jibbers is true What if it is a riddle? What if I guess it What .

*Soldier* But, you poor ass, don't you realize that hundreds upon hundreds of chaps who've been to the stadium and college and everything have left their carcasses behind there, and you, a poor little second-class soldier like you wants to

*Young Soldier* I shall go! I shall, because I can't bear any longer counting the stones of this wall, hearing that band, and seeing your rotten mug, and

[*He stamps*]

*Soldier* That's the stuff, my hero! I was expecting this attack of nerves I like that better Now Now enough crying

Let's calm ourselves there, there, there .

*Young Soldier* I hate you!

[*The SOLDIER bangs his spear against the wall behind the YOUNG SOLDIER who becomes rigid*]

*Soldier* What's up?

*Young Soldier* Didn't you hear anything?

*Soldier* No where?

*Young Soldier* Ah! I seemed I thought for a moment

*Soldier* You're like a sheet What's the matter? Are you going to pass out?

*Young Soldier* It's silly I seemed to hear a knock I thought it was him!

*Soldier* The Sphinx?

*Young Soldier* No, him, the ghost, the phantom, you know!

*Soldier* The phantom? Our dear old phantom of Larus? And is that what turns your stomach over? Really!

*Young Soldier* Sorry

*Soldier* You're sorry, old son of a gun? Don't be so silly! To start with, there's a good chance that our phantom will not appear again after last night's business That's that And besides, what are you

sorry about? Look at things squarely We can hardly say this phantom has scared us Oh! well the first time perhaps But, after that, eh? He was a decent old phantom chap, almost a pal, a relief Well, if the idea of this phantom makes you jumpy, it's because you're in a real state of nerves, like everybody in Thebes, rich or poor alike, except a few bug pots who make something out of everything There's not much fun in war, but do you imagine it's amusing to fight an unknown enemy? We're beginning to get fed up with oracles, happy deaths and heroic mothers Do you think I should pull your leg as I do if my nerves weren't on edge and do you think you'd burst into tears, and that lot over there'd get tight and dance? No, they would stay tucked securely in bed, and we'd be playing dice while waiting for friend phantom

*Young Soldier* I say . . .

*Soldier* Well?

*Young Soldier* What d'you think it's like the Sphinx?

*Soldier* Oh! give the Sphinx a rest If I knew what it was like I shouldn't be here doing guard-duty with you tonight

*Young Soldier* Some make out it's no bigger than a hare, and is timid, and has a sweet little woman's head But I think it has a woman's head and breast, and sleeps with the young men

*Soldier* Oh, look here! Shut up and forget it!

*Young Soldier* Perhaps it doesn't ask anything and doesn't even touch you You meet it, look at it, and die of love

*Soldier* All we needed was for you to go and fall in love with the public scourge After all, public scourge between ourselves, do you know what I think about this public scourge? It's a vampire! Yes, a common or garden vampire! Some old man who is hiding from the police, and somehow they don't manage to lay hands on him

*Young Soldier* A vampire with a woman's head?

*Soldier* Oh! not him! Oh! no! A real old vampire with a beard and moustache, and a belly He sucks your blood and that's how it is they bring corpses back to their families all with the same wound in the same place the back of the neck! And

now go and see for yourself if you're still keen

*Young Soldier* You say that

*Soldier* I say that I say that  
Hi! The chief

[*They stand up to attention The Chief enters and folds his arms*]

*Chief* Easy! Well, my lads  
Is this where we see phantoms?

*Soldier* Chief

*Chief* Silence! You will speak when I ask you Which of you two has dared

*Young Soldier* It's me, chief

*Chief* Good lord! whose turn to speak is it? Are you going to keep quiet? I was asking which of you two has dared to make a report touching the service, in a high place, without it passing through the accepted channels? Right over my head  
*Answer*

*Soldier* It wasn't his fault, chief, he knew

*Chief* Was it you or he?

*Young Soldier* Both of us, but I

*Chief* Silence! I want to know how the high priest came to hear of what happens at night at this post, while I myself heard nothing

*Young Soldier* It's my fault, chief, my fault My comrade here didn't want to say anything about it But I thought I ought to speak and, as this incident didn't concern the service and, well, I told his uncle everything, because his uncle's wife is sister to one of the queen's linen-maids, and his brother-in-law is in Tiresias' temple

*Soldier* That's why I said it was my fault, chief

*Chief* All right! Don't burst my ear-drums So this incident doesn't concern the service Very good, oh! very good!

And it seems this famous incident which doesn't concern the service is a ghost story?

*Young Soldier* Yes, chief

*Chief* A ghost appeared to you one night when you were on sentry-duty, and this ghost said to you Just what did this ghost say to you?

*Young Soldier* He told us, chief, he was the spectre of King Laus, and he had tried to appear several times since his murder, and he begged us to find some way of warning Queen Jocasta and Tiresias with all speed

*Chief* With all speed Fancy that!

What a nice old phantom! And didn't you ask him, say, why you had the honour of this visit and why he doesn't appear directly before the queen or Tiresias?

*Soldier* Yes, chief, I asked him, I did His answer was that he wasn't free to put in an appearance anywhere, and that the ramparts were the most favourable spot for the people who had died violent deaths, because of the drains

*Chief* Drains?

*Soldier* Yes, chief He said drains, meaning the fumes you only find there

*Chief* 'Struth A very learned spectre, and he doesn't hide his light under a bushel Did he scare you much? And what did he look like? What was his face like? What clothes did he wear? Where did he stand, and what language did he speak? Are his visits long or short? Have you seen him on different occasions? Although this business doesn't concern the service, I must admit I am curious to learn from your lips a few details about the manners and customs of ghosts

*Young Soldier* We were scared the first night, chief, I admit I ought to have said he appeared very suddenly, like a lamp lighting up, there in the thickness of the wall

*Soldier* We saw it together

*Young Soldier* It was hard to make out the face and the body, the mouth when it was open, was clearer, and a white tuft of his beard, and a large red stain, bright red, near the right ear He spoke with difficulty and couldn't somehow manage to get out more than one sentence at a time But you'd better ask my comrade here about that, chief He explained to me how it was the poor man couldn't manage to get it over

*Soldier* Oh! you know, chief, it's nothing very difficult He spent all his energy in the effort to appear, that is, in leaving his new shape and taking on the old, so that we could see him That's the reason why each time he spoke a little better, he began to disappear, became transparent like, and you could see the wall through him

*Young Soldier* And as soon as he spoke badly you could see him very well But you saw him badly as soon as he spoke well, and began saying the same thing over again

"Queen Jocasta You must you must  
Queen Queen Queen Jocasta

... You must      You must warn the queen ... You must warn Queen Jocasta . I ask you, gentlemen, I ask you, I . . . I . . . Gentlemen . . . I ask . . . you must . . . you must . . . I ask you, gentlemen, to warn . . . I ask you . . . The queen . . . Queen Jocasta to warn, gentlemen, to warn . . . Gentlemen . . . Gentlemen . . . " That's how he went on

*Soldier* And you could see he was afraid of disappearing before he'd said all his words right to the end

*Young Soldier* And see here, listen a mo', d'you remember? Every time the same business. The red stain went last Just like a ship's light on the wall, chief.

*Soldier* The whole business was over in a second!

*Young Soldier* He has appeared in the same place five times, every night, a little before dawn

*Soldier* But, last night, which was unlike the others, we well, we had a bit of a dust-up, and my comrade here decided to tell the royal house everything

*Chief* Well! Well! And how was this night "unlike the others," which, if I'm not mistaken, caused a dispute between you . . . ?

*Soldier* It was like this, chief      You know, guard-duty isn't exactly all beer and skittles

*Young Soldier* So really we were waiting for the phantom

*Soldier* We betted, saying

*Young Soldier* Will come .

*Soldier* Won't

*Young Soldier* Will come

*Soldier* Won't . . . and it may seem a funny thing to say, but it was a comfort to see him

*Young Soldier* A habit, as you might say.

*Soldier* We ended by imagining we saw him when he wasn't there We'd say to each other "It's moving! The wall is lighting up Don't you see anything? No But you must do. Over there, I tell you . . . The wall isn't the same Don't you see, look! look!"

*Young Soldier* And we looked and stared our eyes out We dared not move

*Soldier* We watched for the least change

*Young Soldier* And when, at last, it came, we could breathe again, and weren't the least bit afraid

*Soldier* The other night, we watched and watched, and stared ourselves nearly blind; we thought he'd not show up, when he began to come stealthily . . . not at all quickly like on the first nights And once he was visible, he changed his sentences and told us as well as he could that something fearful had happened, a thing of death which he couldn't explain to the living He spoke of places where he could go and places where he couldn't go, and that he had been where he shouldn't and knew a secret which he shouldn't know, and that he would be discovered and punished, and afterwards he wouldn't be allowed to appear, he wouldn't be able to appear any more [Solemn voice] "I shall die my last death," he said, "and it will be finished, finished You see, gentlemen, there is not a moment to lose Run! Warn the queen! Find Tiresias! Gentlemen! Gentlemen! have pity! . . ." He was begging away and day was breaking And there he stuck!

*Young Soldier.* Suddenly we thought he'd go mad

*Soldier* We understood from sentences without beginning or end that he had left his post, you know, didn't know how to disappear, and was lost We saw him going through the same performance to disappear as to appear, and he couldn't manage it So then he asked us to insult him, because, he said, insulting ghosts is the way to make them go The silliest thing about it was that we hadn't the guts to do it The more he repeated "Come on! young men, insult me! Let yourselves go, do your best Oh, come on!"—the more idiotic we looked

*Young Soldier.* And the less we found to say!

*Soldier* Yes, that is the limit! And yet, it's not for lack of blasting the chiefs

*Chief* Very nice of you, gentlemen, I'm sure! Thank you for the chiefs

*Soldier* Oh! I didn't mean that, chief

I meant . . . I meant the princes, crowned heads, ministers, the government, what . . . the powers that be We had even chatted about injustices . . . But the king was such a good old phantom, poor King Laius, that the swear-words wouldn't come He was urging us on and we were dithering "Go on then! Hop it, you son of a bitch!" In short, we gave him bouquets!

*Young Soldier* Because, you see, chief

son of a bitch is a friendly way of speaking among soldiers

Chief It's as well to know

Soldier Go on! Go on then! son of a you old Poor phantom! He hung there between life and death and he was outside himself with fear because of the cocks and the sun When, all of a sudden, we saw the wall become the wall again, and the red stain go out We were dog tired

Young Soldier It was after that night that I decided to speak to his uncle as he refused to speak himself

Chief Your phantom doesn't seem to be very punctual

Soldier Oh! chief, you know he may not show himself again

Chief I am in his way, no doubt

Soldier No, chief But after last night

Chief But I understand from what you say that your phantom is very polite He will appear, I'm quite sure In the first place, the politeness of kings is punctuality, and the politeness of phantoms consists in taking on human form according to your ingenious theory

Soldier Possibly, chief, but it's also possible that with phantoms there are no more kings, and they may mistake a century for a minute So if the phantom appears in a thousand years instead of this evening

Chief You're a clever sort of chap, but patience has its limits I tell you this phantom will appear I tell you my presence is upsetting him, and I tell you that no one outside the service must pass along this sentry path

Soldier Yes, chief

Chief [in an outburst] So, phantom or no phantom, I order you to stop the first person who turns up unless he gives the password, got it?

Soldier Yes, chief

Chief And don't forget to patrol That's all!

[The two SOLDIERS stand stiffly at shoulder-arms]

Chief [false exit] Don't try any clever tricks! I've got my eye on you

[He disappears Long silence]

Soldier That's that

Young Soldier He thought we were trying to pull his leg

Soldier Oh, no, my friend! He thought someone was trying to pull our legs

Young Soldier Ours?

Soldier Yes, my friend I get to know lots of things through my uncle The queen is nice, but at bottom she isn't liked, they find her [He strikes his head] They say she is eccentric and has a foreign accent, and is under the influence of Tiresias This Tiresias advises the queen to do everything that will harm her Do this . and do that She tells him her dreams, and asks him if she ought to get up right foot or left foot first, he leads her by the nose and licks her brother's boots, and plots with him against the sister They are a low lot there I wouldn't mind betting the chief thought the phantom was from the same source as the Sphinx A priest's trick to attract Jocasta and make her believe anything they want

Young Soldier No?

Soldier Pretty flabbergasting, eh? But that's how it is [In a very low voice] As for me, I believe in the phantom, take it from me But, for that very reason and because they don't believe in it, I advise you to keep your mouth shut You've already succeeded in making a fine hash of things Take down this report "Has given proof of an intelligence well above his rank"

Young Soldier Still, if our king

Soldier Our king! Our king! Half a mo'! A dead king isn't a living king It's like this, if King Laius were living, well, between ourselves, he would manage on his own and wouldn't come looking for you to do his errands in town

[They move off towards the right by the patrol path]

The Voice of Jocasta [at the bottom of the steps She has a very strong accent the international accent of royalty] Still another flight! I hate steps! Why all these steps? We can see nothing! Where are we?

The Voice of Tiresias But, Madam, you know what I think of this escapade, and I didn't

Voice of Jocasta Stop it, Zizi You only open your mouth to say silly things This is not the time for moral lessons

Voice of Tiresias You should have taken another guide I am nearly blind

Voice of Jocasta What is the use of being a soothsayer, I wonder! Why, you don't even know where the steps are I



shall break my leg! It will be your fault, Zizi, your fault, as usual

*Tiresias* My fleshly eyes have gone out to the advantage of an inner eye which has other uses than counting steps

*Jocasta* And now, he's cross all over his eye! There! There! We love you, Zizi, but these flights of steps upset me so We had to come, Zizi, we simply had to!

*Tiresias* Madam .

*Jocasta* Don't be obstinate I had no idea there were all these wretched steps I am going to go up backwards You will steady me Don't be afraid I am leading you But if I looked at the steps, I should fall Take my hands Forward!

*[They appear on the set]*

There there there four, five, six, seven .

*[Jocasta arrives on the platform and moves to the right Tiresias treads on the end of her scarf She utters a cry]*

*Tiresias* What is it?

*Jocasta* It's your foot, Zizi! You're walking on my scarf

*Tiresias* Forgive me

*Jocasta* Ah! he's cross! But it isn't you I'm annoyed with, it's the scarf! I am surrounded by objects which hate me! All day long this scarf is strangling me At one time it catches in the branches, at another, it gets wound on the hub of a carriage, another time you tread on it It's a positive fact I am afraid of it, but I dare not be separated from it! Awful! It will be the death of me

*Tiresias* Look what a state your nerves are in

*Jocasta* And what is the use of your third eye, I should like to know? Have you found the Sphinx? Have you found the murderers of Laius? Have you calmed the people? Guards are stationed at my door, and I am left with things that hate me, that want my death!

*Tiresias* From mere hearsay

*Jocasta* I feel things I feel things better than all of you! *[She puts her hand on her belly]* I feel them there! Has every stone been turned to discover the murderers of Laius?

*Tiresias* Madam knows very well the Sphinx made further searches impossible

*Jocasta* Well, I for one don't care a jot about yours fowls' entrails I feel, there that Laius is suffering and wants

to complain I am determined to get to the bottom of this story, and to hear this young guard for myself, and I *shall* hear him I am your queen, Tiresias, don't you forget it

*Tiresias* My dear child, you must try and understand a poor blind man who adores you, watches over you, and wishes you were sleeping in your room instead of running after a shadow on the ramparts

*Jocasta* *[with mystery]* I do not sleep

*Tiresias* You don't sleep?

*Jocasta* No, Zizi, I don't sleep The Sphinx and the murder of Laius have put my nerves all on edge You were right there, even better than that if I fall asleep for so much as a minute I have a dream, one dream only, and I am ill for the whole day

*Tiresias* Isn't it my business to interpret dreams?

*Jocasta* The place of the dream is rather like this platform, so I'll tell you I am standing in the night, cradling a kind of nursing Suddenly, this nursing becomes a sticky paste which runs through my fingers I shriek and try to throw this paste away, but Oh! Zizi if only you knew, it's foul This thing, this paste stays hanging on to me, and when I think I'm free of it, the paste flies back and strikes me across the face And this paste is living It has a kind of mouth which fixes itself on mine And it creeps everywhere, it feels after my belly, and my thighs How beastly!

*Tiresias* Calm yourself

*Jocasta* I don't want to sleep any more, Zizi . I don't want to sleep any more Listen to that music Where is it? They don't sleep either It's lucky for them they have that music They are afraid, Zizi . and rightly. They must dream horrible things and they don't want to sleep And while I think of it, why this music? Why is it allowed? Do I have music to keep me from sleeping? I didn't know these places stayed open all night How is it there is this scandal, Zizi? Creon must send out orders! This music must be stopped This scandal must stop at once

*Tiresias* Madam, I implore you to calm yourself and to give up this idea You're beside yourself for lack of sleep We have authorized these bands so that the people don't become demoralized, to keep up their courage There would be crimes and

worse than that if there were no dancing in the working-class district

*Jocasta* Do I dance?

*Tiresias* That's different You are in mourning for Laus

*Jocasta* So are they all, Zizi All of them! Every one! And yet they can dance and I can't It's too unfair I shall

*Tiresias* Some one coming, Madam

*Jocasta* I say, Zizi, I'm shaking I have come out with all my jewels

*Tiresias* There's nothing to fear You won't meet prowlers on the patrol path It must be the guards

*Jocasta* Perhaps the soldier I am looking for?

*Tiresias* Don't move We'll find out

[*The SOLDIERS enter They see JOCASTA and TIRESIAS*]

*Young Soldier* Steady, looks like somebody

*Soldier* Where have you sprung from? [*Aloud*] Who goes there?

*Tiresias* [*to the QUEEN*] We are going to get into hot water [*Aloud*] Listen, my good men

*Young Soldier* Password

*Tiresias* You see, Madam, we ought to have the password You're getting us into an awful mess

*Jocasta* Password? Why? What password? How silly, Zizi I shall go and speak to him myself

*Tiresias* Madam, I implore you They have instructions These guards might not recognize you, nor believe me It's very dangerous

*Jocasta* How romantic you are! You see dramas everywhere

*Soldier* They're whispering together Perhaps they will jump out on us

*Tiresias* [*to the SOLDIERS*] You have nothing to fear I am old and nearly blind Let me explain my presence on these ramparts, and the presence of the person who accompanies me

*Soldier* No speeches The password!

*Tiresias* One moment Just a moment Listen, my good men, have you seen any gold coins?

*Soldier* Attempted bribery

[*He goes towards the right to guard the patrol path and leaves the YOUNG SOLDIER opposite TIRESIAS*]

*Tiresias* You're wrong I meant have

you seen the queen's portrait on a gold coin?

*Young Soldier* Yes!

*Tiresias* [*gets out of the way and shows the QUEEN, who is counting the stars, in profile*] And don't you recognize ?

*Young Soldier* I don't see the connexion you mean between the queen, who is quite young, and this matron

*Jocasta* What does he say?

*Tiresias* He says he finds Madam very young to be the queen

*Jocasta* He's entertaining!

*Tiresias* [*to the SOLDIER*] Fetch your chief

*Soldier* Not necessary I have orders Clear off! look sharp!

*Tiresias* You'll learn of this!

*Jocasta* Zizi, what is it now? What does he say?

[*The CHIEF enters*]

*Chief* What's this?

*Young Soldier* Chief! Two people here are wandering about without the password

*Chief* [*going towards TIRESIAS*] Who are you? [*He suddenly recognizes TIRESIAS*] My lord! [*He bows*] How can I ever apologize enough?

*Tiresias* Phew! Thanks, Captain I thought this young warrior was going to run us through

*Chief* How can you forgive me? [*To the YOUNG SOLDIER*] Idiot! Leave us

[*The YOUNG SOLDIER goes to his comrade on the extreme right*]

*Soldier* [*to the YOUNG SOLDIER*] What a brick!

*Tiresias* Don't scold him! He was obeying orders

*Chief* Such a visit . in such a place! What can I do for you, my lord?

*Tiresias* [*standing back to show the QUEEN*] Her majesty!

[*The CHIEF starts back*]

*Chief* [*bows at a respectful distance*] Madam!

*Jocasta* No ceremony, please! I should like to know which guard saw the phantom?

*Chief* The clumsy young oaf who allowed himself to ill-use my lord Tiresias, and if Madam

*Jocasta* See, Zizi What luck! I was right in coming. [*To the CHIEF*] Tell him to approach

*The Chief* [*to TIRESIAS*] My lord

don't know if the queen fully realizes that this young soldier would explain himself better through the medium of his chief, and that, if he speaks alone, Her Majesty risks

*Jocasta* What now, Zizi?

*Tiresias* The chief was pointing out to me that he is used to the men and he might serve as a kind of interpreter

*Jocasta* Send the chief away! Has the boy a tongue, or not? Let him come near

*Tiresias* [*aside to the CHIEF*] Don't insist, the queen is overwrought

*Chief* Very well [*He goes to his SOLDIERS To the YOUNG SOLDIER*] The queen wants to speak to you And control your tongue I'll pay you out for this, young fellow-me-lad

*Jocasta* Come here!

[*The CHIEF pushes the YOUNG SOLDIER forward*]

*Chief* Go along then! Go on, booby, forward You won't be eaten Excuse him, Your Majesty Our boys are scarcely familiar with court ways

*Jocasta* Ask that man to leave us alone with the soldier

*Tiresias* But, Madam

*Jocasta* And no but-Madams . If this Captain stays a moment longer, I shall kick him

*Tiresias* Listen, chief [*He leads him aside*] The queen wants to be alone with the guard who has seen something She has whims She might become displeased with you and I couldn't do anything about it

*Chief* Right I'll leave you . . . If I stayed it was because well I don't mean to give you advice, my lord But, between you and me, be on your guard about this phantom story [*He bows*] My lord [*A long salute to the QUEEN He passes near the SOLDIER*] Hi! The queen wishes to stay alone with your comrade

*Jocasta* Who is the other soldier? Has he seen the phantom?

*Young Soldier* Yes, Your Majesty, we were on guard-duty together

*Jocasta* Then let him stop. Let him stay there! I'll call him if I want him Good evening, Captain, you are free

*Chief* [*to the SOLDIER*] We'll have this out later!

[*He goes out*]

*Tiresias* [*to the QUEEN*] You have mortally offended that Captain

*Jocasta* About time too! Generally it's the men who are mortally offended and never the chiefs [*To the YOUNG SOLDIER*] How old are you?

*Young Soldier* Nineteen

*Jocasta* Exactly his age! He would be his age He looks splendid! Come nearer Look, Zizi, what muscles! I adore knees You can tell the breed by the knees He would look like that too Isn't he fine, Zizi Feel these biceps, like iron

*Tiresias* I am sorry, Madam, but you know I'm no authority I can scarcely see what they're like

*Jocasta* Then feel . . . Test them Thighs like a horse! He steps away! Don't be afraid . . . The old grandpa is blind Heaven knows what he's imagining, poor lad He's quite red! He's adorable! And nineteen!

*Young Soldier* Yes, Your Majesty!

*Jocasta* [*mocking him*] Yes, Your Majesty! Isn't he just too delicious? Ah! what a shame! Perhaps he doesn't even know he's handsome [*As one speaks to a child*] Well, did you see the phantom?

*Young Soldier* Yes, Your Majesty!

*Jocasta* The phantom of King Laius?

*Young Soldier* Yes, Your Majesty! The king told us he was the king

*Jocasta* Zizi what do you know with all your fowls and stars? Listen to this boy And what did the king say?

*Tiresias* [*leading the QUEEN away*] Madam! Be careful, these young people are hotheaded, credulous pushful Be on your guard Are you certain this boy has seen the phantom, and, even if he has seen it, is it really the phantom of your husband?

*Jocasta* Gods! How unbearable you are! Unbearable and a spoilsport Every time you come and break the spell and you stop miracles with your intelligence and incredulity Please, let me question this boy on my own You can preach afterwards [*To the YOUNG SOLDIER*] Listen . . .

*Young Soldier* Your Majesty!

*Jocasta* [*to TIRESIAS*] I'll find out straight away whether he has seen Laius [*To the YOUNG SOLDIER*] How did he speak?

*Young Soldier* He spoke quickly and a lot, Your Majesty, ever such a lot, and he

got mixed up, and he didn't manage to say what he wanted to

*Jocasta* That's he! Poor dear! But why on these ramparts? The stench

*Young Soldier* That's it, Your Majesty

The phantom said it was because of the swamps and the rising fumes that he could appear

*Jocasta* How interesting! Tiresias, you would never learn that from your birds And what did he say?

*Tiresias* Madam, Madam, you must at least question him with some order You'll muddle this youngster's head completely

*Jocasta* Quite right, Zizi, quite right [To the YOUNG SOLDIER] What was he like? How did you see him?

*Young Soldier* In the wall, Your Majesty A sort of transparent statue, as you might say You can see the beard most clearly, and the black hole of the mouth as it speaks, and a red stain on the temple, bright red

*Jocasta* That's blood!

*Young Soldier* Fancy! We didn't think of that

*Jocasta* It's a wound! How dreadful! [LAUS appears] And what did he say? Did you understand anything?

*Young Soldier* It wasn't easy, Your Majesty My comrade noticed that he had to make a big effort to appear, and each time he made an effort to express himself clearly, he disappeared, then he was puzzled as to how to set about it

*Jocasta* Poor dear!

*The Phantom* Jocasta! Jocasta! My wife! Jocasta!

[They neither hear nor see him during the whole of the scene]

*Tiresias* [addressing the SOLDIER] And were you not able to grasp anything intelligible?

*Phantom* Jocasta!

*Soldier* Well, yes, my lord We understood he wanted to warn you of a danger, put you on your guard, both the queen and you, but that's all The last time he explained he knew some secrets he ought not to have known, and if he was discovered, he would not be able to appear again.

*Phantom* Jocasta! Tiresias! Can't you see me? Can't you hear me?

*Jocasta* And didn't he say anything else? Didn't he say anything particular?

*Soldier* Ah, well, Your Majesty! Per-

haps he didn't want to say anything particular in our presence He was asking for you That is why my comrade tried to inform you

*Jocasta* Dear boys! And I have come I knew very well I felt it there! You see, Zizi, with all your doubts And tell us, young soldier, where the spectre appeared I want to touch the spot

*Phantom* Look at me! Listen to me, Jocasta! Guards, you always saw me before Why not see me now? It's a torment! Jocasta! Jocasta!

[While these words are being uttered, the SOLDIER goes to the place where the PHANTOM is He touches it with his hand]

*Soldier* There [He strikes the wall] There, in the wall

*Young Soldier* Or in front of the wall It was difficult to make out

*Jocasta* But why doesn't he appear tonight? Do you think he will still be able to appear?

*Phantom* Jocasta! Jocasta! Jocasta!

*Soldier* I am sorry, Madam, I don't think so, after what happened last night I'm afraid there may have been a bit of a dust-up, Your Majesty may be too late

*Jocasta* What a shame! Always too late Zizi, I am always the last person in the whole kingdom to be informed Think of the time that has been wasted with your fowls and oracles! We ought to have run, to have guessed We shall learn absolutely nothing! And there will be disasters And it will be your fault, Zizi, your fault, as usual

*Tiresias* Madam, the queen is speaking in front of these men

*Jocasta* Yes, I am speaking in front of these men! I suppose I ought to restrain myself? When King LAUS, the dead King LAUS, has spoken in front of these men But he has not spoken to you, Zizi, nor to Creon He hasn't been to the temple to show himself He showed himself on the patrol path to these men, to this boy of nineteen who is so handsome and looks like

*Tiresias* I implore you .

*Jocasta* Yes, I am overwrought, you must try to understand These dangers, this spectre, this music, this pestilential smell And there's a storm about I can

feel it in my shoulder I am stifling, Zizi, stifling

*Phantom* Jocasta! Jocasta!

*Jocasta* I think I hear my name Didn't you hear anything?

*Tiresias* My poor lamb You're worn out Day is breaking You are dreaming where you stand Are you even sure this phantom business hasn't come from the fatigue of these young men on the watch who force themselves not to sleep and live in this depressing, swampy atmosphere?

*Phantom* Jocasta! For pity's sake, listen to me! Look at me! Gentlemen, you are kind Keep the queen *Tiresias!* *Tiresias!*

*Tiresias* [to the YOUNG SOLDIER] Step aside a moment, I want to speak to the queen

[The YOUNG SOLDIER goes to his comrade]

*The Soldier* Well, old son! You've clicked! She's fallen for it! Petted by the queen, eh!

*Young Soldier* Look here!

*Soldier* You're made for life Don't forget your pals

*Tiresias* Listen! Cockcrow The phantom will not return Let us go home

*Jocasta* Did you see how handsome he is?

*Tiresias* Don't revive those sad things, my lamb If you had a son.

*Jocasta* If I had a son, he would be handsome, brave, he would guess the riddle and kill the Sphinx He would return victor

*Tiresias* And you would go without a husband

*Jocasta* Little boys always say "I want to become a man so that I can marry mother" It's not such a bad idea, you know, *Tiresias* Is there a sweeter union, a union that is sweeter and more cruel, and prouder, than that couple a son and a young mother? Listen, *Zizi*, just now, when I touched that young guard, Heaven alone knows what he must have thought, the poor lad, and I myself nearly fainted He would be nineteen, *Tiresias*, nineteen! The same age as this soldier Can we be sure *Laius* did not appear to him because of this likeness?

[Cockcrows]

*Phantom* Jocasta! Jocasta! Jocasta!  
*Tiresias!* *Jocasta!*

*Tiresias* [to the SOLDIERS] My friends do you think it is any use waiting?

*Phantom* For pity's sake!

*Soldier* Frankly, no, my lord The cocks are crowing He will not appear now

*Phantom* Gentlemen! Mercy! Am I invisible? Can't you hear me?

*Jocasta* Come along! I will be obedient But I am very glad I questioned the boy You must find out his name and where he lives [She goes towards the steps] I had forgotten these steps, *Zizi!* That band is making me ill Listen, we can go back through the higher town by the little streets and we can visit the night clubs

*Tiresias* Madam, you don't mean it

*Jocasta* Oh! Now he's beginning again! He'll send me simply raving! Mad and off my head I've got my veils on, *Zizi*, how do you expect I should be recognized?

*Tiresias* My child, you said yourself you have come out wearing all your jewels Your brooch alone has pearls as large as an egg

*Jocasta* I am a martyr! Others can laugh and dance and amuse themselves Do you imagine I am going to leave this brooch at the palace where it simply strikes everybody's eye? Call the guard Tell him to help me down these steps. And you can follow us

*Tiresias* But, Madam, since the presence of this young man affects you . .

*Jocasta* He is young and strong He will help me, and I shan't break my neck Obey your queen once, at least

*Tiresias* Hi! No, he Yes, you Help the queen down the steps

*Soldier* You see, old man!

*Young Soldier* [approaching] Yes, my lord

*Phantom* Jocasta! Jocasta! Jocasta!

*Jocasta* He's nervous! And flights of steps hate me Steps, hooks, and scarves Oh! yes, they do, they hate me! They're after my death [A cry] Ho!

*Young Soldier.* Has the queen hurt herself?

*Tiresias.* No, silly! Your foot! Your foot!

*Young Soldier* What foot?

*Tiresias* Your foot on the end of the scarf You nearly strangled the queen

*Young Soldier* Ye gods!

*Jocasta* *Zizi*, you are utterly ridiculous Poor darling There you go calling him a

murderer because he walks, as you did, on this scarf Don't upset yourself, my boy My lord is absurd He never misses an opportunity of hurting people's feelings

*Tiresias* But, Madam,

*Jocasta* You are the one who is clumsy Come along Thank you, my boy Send your name and address to the temple One, two, three, four Marvellous! Zizi! Do you see how well I'm getting down Eleven, twelve Zizi, are you following? Two more steps [*To the SOLDIER*] Thank you I can manage now Help grandpa!

[*Jocasta disappears left, with Tiresias Cocks are heard*]

*Voice of Jocasta* Through your fault, I shall never know what my poor Laius wanted

*Phantom* Jocasta!

*Voice of Tiresias* That story is all very vague

*Voice of Jocasta* What? Very vague? What do you mean, vague? It's you who are vague with your third eye That boy knows what he has seen, and he has seen the king Have you seen the king?

*Voice of Tiresias* But

*Voice of Jocasta* Have you seen him?  
No Well It's amazing  
it's like

[*The voices die away*]

*Phantom* Jocasta! Tiresias! Have pity!

[*The two SOLDIERS turn to each other and see the PHANTOM*]

*The Two Soldiers* Oh! the spectre!

*Phantom* Gentlemen, at last! I am saved! I kept calling, begging

*Soldier* You were there?

*Phantom* During the whole of your talk with the queen and Tiresias Then why was I invisible?

*Young Soldier* I'll run and fetch them!

*Soldier* Halt!

*Phantom* What? You stop him?

*Young Soldier* Let me go

*Soldier* When the joiner comes the chair stops wobbling, when you get to the shoemaker, your sandal stops hurting you, when you get to the doctor, you no longer feel the pain Fetch them! They would only have to arrive to make the phantom disappear

*Phantom* Alas! Do these simple souls then know what the priests cannot divine?

*Young Soldier* I shall go

*Phantom* Too late Stay It is too late I am discovered They are coming, they are going to take me Ah! they're here! Help! Help! Quick! Tell the queen a young man is approaching Thebes, and on no account No! No! Mercy! Mercy! They've got me! Help! Ended! I I Mercy I I

[*Long silence The two SOLDIERS, back to the audience, contemplate endlessly the place in the wall where the PHANTOM disappeared*]

*Soldier* Not so gay!

*Young Soldier* No!

*Soldier* These things are beyond us, old man

*Young Soldier* But what is clear is that, in spite of death, that fellow wanted, at all costs, to warn his wife of a danger which is threatening her My duty is to overtake the queen and the high priest and repeat to them word for word what we have just heard

*Soldier* Do you want the queen?

[*The YOUNG SOLDIER shrugs his shoulders*]

Then he only had to appear to them and talk to them, they were here We saw him all right ourselves and they didn't, and they even prevented us from seeing him, and that takes the biscuit This proves that dead kings become private individuals Poor Laius! Now he knows how easy it is to get into touch with the great of the earth

*Young Soldier* But us?

*Soldier* Oh! us! It's easy to get into touch with men, you coon But, don't you see chiefs, queens, and high priests they always go before it happens, or come when it's all over

*Young Soldier* What's "it"?

*Soldier* How should I know? I understand myself, that's the chief thing

*Young Soldier* And you wouldn't go and warn the queen?

*Soldier* A word of advice let princes deal with princes, phantoms with phantoms, and soldiers with soldiers

[*Flourish*]

## ACT TWO

### THE MEETING OF OEDIPUS AND THE SPHINX

*The Voice* Spectators let us imagine we can recall the minutes we have just lived through together and relive them elsewhere

For, while the Phantom of Larus was trying to warn Jocasta on the ramparts of Thebes, the Sphinx and Oedipus met on a hill overlooking the town. The bugle-calls, moon, stars, and crowing cocks will be the same.

*An unpeopled spot on a hill overlooking Thebes, by moonlight. The road to Thebes (from right to left) passes over the fore-stage. It gives the impression of rounding a high leaning stone whose base is fixed at the lower end of the platform and forms the support for the wings on the right. Behind the ruins of a little temple is a broken wall. In the middle of the wall stands a complete pedestal which used to indicate the entrance to the temple and bears the trace of a chimera: a wing, a foot, a haunch.*

*Broken and overturned columns. For the shades of Anubis and Nemesis at the end, a record by the actors can declaim the dialogue, whilst the actress mimes the part of the dead girl with the head of a jackal.*

*When the curtain rises a girl in a white dress is seen sitting among the ruins. The head of a jackal lies in her lap, its body remaining hidden behind her. Distant bugle-calls.*

*The Sphinx:* Listen.

*The Jackal:* Well?

*The Sphinx:* That's the last call. We're free.

*[ANUBIS gets up and the JACKAL's head is seen to belong to him.]*

*The Jackal, Anubis:* It's the first. There'll be two more before the gates are closed.

*The Sphinx:* It's the last. I'm quite sure it's the last.

*Anubis:* You're sure because you want the gates closed, but I'm sorry duty forces me to contradict you, we're not free. That was the first bugle call. We'll wait.

*The Sphinx:* I may have been mistaken, but

*Anubis:* May have been mistaken! You were

*The Sphinx:* Anubis!

*Anubis:* Sphinx?

*The Sphinx:* I've had enough of killing, enough of dealing out death.

*Anubis:* We must obey. There are mysteries within mystery, gods above gods. We have our gods and they have theirs. That's what is called infinity.

*The Sphinx:* You see, Anubis, there is no second call. It's you who are mistaken, let us go.

*Anubis:* Do you mean you would like this night to pass without any deaths?

*The Sphinx:* Yes! I do, indeed! Yes! Although it's growing late, I tremble to think some one may still come by.

*Anubis:* You're getting sensitive.

*The Sphinx:* That's my business.

*Anubis:* Don't get cross.

*The Sphinx:* Why must we always be acting without aim, without end, without understanding? Why, for example, should you have a dog's head, Anubis? Why have the god of the dead in the shape given to him by credulous people? Why must we have an Egyptian god in Greece and why must he have a dog's head?

*Anubis:* It's marvellous, how like a woman you look when it comes to asking questions.

*The Sphinx:* That is no answer!

*Anubis:* Well, my answer is that logic forces us to appear to men in the shape in which they imagine us, otherwise, they would see only emptiness. Moreover, neither Egypt nor Greece nor death, neither the past nor the future has any meaning for us. Further, you know only too well to what use I must put this jaw. And finally, our masters prove their wisdom by giving me a material form which is not human and so preventing me from losing my head, however beastly it may be, for I am your keeper, remember. I can see that if they had given you a mere watchdog we should already be in Thebes with me on a leash and you sitting in the middle of a band of young men.

*The Sphinx:* How stupid you are!

*Anubis:* Then try and remember that these victims who touch the girl-figure you have assumed are no more than noughts wiped off a slate, even if each of these noughts were an open mouth calling for help.

*The Sphinx:* That may be. But here the calculations of gods are hard to follow.

Here we kill. Here the dead really die. Here I do kill.

*[While the SPHINX was speaking with her eyes on the ground, ANUBIS pricked up his ears, looked round, and moved silently off over the ruins where he disappears. When the SPHINX raises*



*her eyes, she looks for ANUBIS and finds herself face to face with a small group of people who enter down stage right, and whom ANUBIS had scented. The group is composed of a Theban MATRON, her little boy and girl. The MATRON is dragging her daughter along. The boy is walking ahead.]*

*The Matron* Look where you're going! Get along now! Don't look behind you! Leave your sister alone! Go on. [*She sees the SPHINX as the little boy stumbles into her.*] Look out! I told you to look where you're going! Oh! I'm so sorry, madam. He never looks where he's going. He hasn't hurt you, has he?

*The Sphinx* No! not at all, madam.

*The Matron* I didn't expect to meet any one on my path at such an hour.

*The Sphinx* I'm new to these parts, I haven't been long in Thebes, I was on my way to a relative who lives in the country and got lost.

*The Matron* Poor dear! And where does your relative live?

*The Sphinx* Near the twelfth milestone.

*The Matron* The very part I come from! I had lunch with my family, at my brother's place, you know. He made me stay to dinner. And then you know you begin gossiping and don't notice the time, and so here I am going home after curfew with my brats half-asleep already.

*The Sphinx* Good-night, madam.

*The Matron* Good-night. [*She makes to go.*] And I say don't linger on the way. I know the likes of you and me haven't much to fear but I wouldn't be too bold, if I were you, till I was inside the walls.

*The Sphinx* Are you afraid of thieves?

*The Matron* Thieves! Ye gods, what could they get out of me? Oh! no, my dear. Where do you come from? Any one can see you're not from the town. Thieves! I should think so! I mean the Sphinx!

*The Sphinx* Do you really, madam, honestly and truly believe in that nonsense yourself?

*The Matron* That nonsense indeed! How young you are. Young people are so disbelieving these days. Oh! yes, they are. That's how disasters happen. Let alone the Sphinx, I'll give you a case from my family. My brother that I've just left

[*She sits down and lowers her voice.*] He married a beautiful tall blonde from the north. One night he wakes up and what does he find? His wife in bed without head or entrails. She was a vampire. When he'd got over the first fright, what does my brother do? Without a moment's hesitation he finds an egg and lays it on the pillow in the place of his wife's head. That's how you stop vampires getting back into their body. All at once he hears a moaning. It was the head and entrails flying wildly across the room and begging my brother to take away the egg. My brother wouldn't, and the head went from moans to anger, from anger to tears, from tears to kisses. To cut a long story short, my idiot brother takes away the egg and lets his wife get back into her body. Now he knows his wife is a vampire and my sons make fun of their uncle. They maintain that he made up this entire vampire story to disguise the fact that his wife really did go out, but with her body, and that he let her come back, and that he's a coward and ashamed of himself. But I know very well my sister-in-law is a vampire. And my sons are in danger of marrying fiends from the Underworld, all because they are obstinate and disbelieving.

And the same with the Sphinx—I'm sorry if I hurt your feelings, but it's only the likes of my sons and you who don't believe in it.

*The Sphinx* Your sons? ?

*The Matron* Not the little brat who just bumped into you. I mean my boy of seventeen.

*The Sphinx* You have several sons, have you?

*The Matron* I had four. Now I have three. Seven, sixteen, and seventeen. And I can tell you ever since that wicked beast appeared the house has been impossible.

*The Sphinx* Your sons quarrel? ?

*The Matron* I mean, my dear, that it's impossible to live under the same roof. The one who's sixteen is only interested in politics. According to him the Sphinx is a bugbear used to scare the poor and to impose on them. There may have been something like your old Sphinx at one time—that's how my son speaks—but now the old Sphinx is dead, and he's merely a priest's demon and an excuse for police jobbery. They fleece and loot and terrorize the masses and then blame it all on the Sphinx. It's a



good thing the Sphinx has broad shoulders. Whose fault is it that we starve to death, that prices go up, and that bands of looters swarm over the countryside? Why, the Sphinx's, of course. And the Sphinx is to blame because business is bad, and the government's weak and one crash follows another, because the temples are glutted with rich offerings whilst mothers and wives are losing the bare necessities of life, and because foreigners with money to spend are leaving the town . . . Ah, you should see him, miss, how he gets up on the table, shouting, waving his arms, and stamping his feet, and then he denounces those who are responsible for it all, preaches revolt, eggs on the anarchists, shouting at the top of his voice names that are enough to get us all hanged. And between ourselves, miss I know . . . you can take it from me the Sphinx exists all right, but they're making the most of it. You can be sure of that. What we want is a man, a dictator!

*The Sphinx* And . . . what about the brother of your young dictator?

*The Matron* Oh! he's another kettle of fish. He despises his brother, he despises me, he despises the gods, he despises everything. He makes you wonder where he can get hold of all he comes out with. He says, if you please, that the Sphinx would interest him if it killed for killing's sake, but that this Sphinx of ours is in league with the oracles, and so it doesn't interest him.

*The Sphinx* And your fourth son? When was it . . . ?

*The Matron* I lost him nearly a year ago. He was just nineteen.

*The Sphinx* Poor woman . . . What did he die of?

*The Matron* The Sphinx.

*The Sphinx* [gloomily] Ah!

*The Matron* It's all very well for his younger brother to maintain he was a victim of police intrigues. Oh! no. There's no mistake, he died through the Sphinx. Ah! my dear . . . if I live to a hundred I'll never forget that scene. One morning (he hadn't been home that night) I thought I heard him knock, I opened the front door and saw the underneath of his poor feet and then there followed a long way off, ever so far away, his poor little face, and in the back of his neck—look, just here—a large wound from which the blood had already stopped flowing. They

brought him to me on a stretcher. Then I went. Ho! and fell, all of a heap. A blow like that, you know, you don't get over in a hurry. You may be thankful you don't come from Thebes, thankful if you have no brothers . . . You're lucky. My other boy, the orator, wants to avenge him. What's the good? But he hates the priests, and my poor son was one of a series of human offerings.

*The Sphinx* Human offerings?

*The Matron* To be sure. During the first months of the Sphinx the soldiers were sent to avenge the fine young men who were found dead all over the place, and they returned empty-handed. The Sphinx couldn't be found. Then, as there was a rumour that the Sphinx asked riddles, young people from the schools were sacrificed, and then the priests stated that the Sphinx demanded human offerings. At that, the youngest and weakest and fairest were chosen.

*The Sphinx* Poor woman!

*The Matron* I tell you, my dear, what we want is a man of action. Queen Jocasta is still young. At a distance you would say she was twenty-nine or thirty. What we want is a ruler to fall from the sky, marry her, and kill the beast, some one to make an end of corruption, lock up Creon and Tiresias, improve the state of finance and live up the people, some one who would care for the people and save us, yes, that's it, save us.

*The Son* Mummy!

*The Matron* Sh!

*The Son* Mummy . . . I say, mummy, what does the Sphinx look like?

*The Matron* I don't know. [To the SPHINX] And what d'you think is the latest? They're asking us to contribute our last farthings for a monument to those killed by the Sphinx! Will that bring them back to us, I should like to know.

*The Son* Mummy . . . what is the Sphinx like?

*The Sphinx* Poor little chap! His sister's asleep. Come along.

[THE SON clings to the skirt of the SPHINX]

*The Matron* Now don't worry the lady.

*The Sphinx* He's all right. [She strokes his neck]

*The Son* I say, mummy, is this lady the Sphinx?

*The Matron* Little silly. [To the

SPHINX] I hope you don't mind At that age children don't know what they're saying [She gets up] Oh my! [She takes the little girl who is asleep in her arms]

Come along now! Off we go, lazy-bones

The Son Mummy, is that lady the Sphinx? I say, mummy, is the Sphinx that lady? Is that the Sphinx, mummy?

The Matron Sh! Don't be silly [To the SPHINX] Well, good evening Excuse my gossiping to you I was glad to stop for a breather And take care [Fanfare] Quickly There's the second bugle After the third we'll be shut out

The Sphinx Go along, quickly I'll hurry my way You've put me on my guard

The Matron Believe me, we'll not feel safe until there comes a man who will rid us of this scourge

[She goes out left]

The Son's Voice I say, mummy, what's the Sphinx look like? Why wasn't it that lady? Then, what's he like?

The Sphinx A scourge!

Anubis [coming from among the ruins] That woman would have to come along here just now

The Sphinx I've been unhappy for the past two days, for two days now I've been carrying on in this miserable way in the hope that this massacre would come to an end

Anubis Don't worry You're all right

The Sphinx Listen This is my secret wish and these the circumstances which would allow me to mount my pedestal for a last time A young man will climb the hill, I shall fall in love with him He'll have no fear And when I ask my question he will answer as to an equal He will give the answer, d'you hear, Anubis, and I shall fall dead

Anubis Make no mistake only your mortal form will fall dead

The Sphinx And isn't that the form I should want to live in to make him happy!

Anubis It's nice to see that human form doesn't make a great goddess become a little woman

The Sphinx You see how right I was That bugle we heard was the last after all

Anubis Daughter of men! One is never finished with you I tell you no! No! [He leaves her side and mounts an over-turned column] That was the second

When I've heard another one you can go Oh!

The Sphinx What is it?

Anubis Bad news

The Sphinx Some one coming?

Anubis Yes

[The SPHINX gets up beside ANUBIS and looks into the wings, right]

The Sphinx I can't! I can't and I won't question this young man You needn't ask me to

Anubis I should say, if you're like a young mortal, he's like a young god

The Sphinx What grace, Anubis, and what shoulders! He's coming

Anubis I'll hide Don't forget you are the Sphinx I'm keeping my eye on you I'll be with you at the first sign

The Sphinx Anubis, listen quickly . .

Anubis Sh! He's here [ANUBIS hides]

[OEDIPUS enters up stage right He is walking along with his eyes on the ground He starts]

Oedipus Oh! I'm sorry

The Sphinx I startled you

Oedipus Well no I was dreaming, I was miles away, and suddenly, before me

The Sphinx You took me for an animal

Oedipus Almost

The Sphinx Almost? Almost an animal, that's the Sphinx

Oedipus Yes, I know

The Sphinx You admit you took me for the Sphinx Thank you

Oedipus Oh! I soon realized my mistake

The Sphinx Too kind The truth of the matter is, it can't be so amusing to find yourself suddenly face to face with the Sphinx, if you're a young man

Oedipus And if you're a girl?

The Sphinx He doesn't attack girls

Oedipus Because girls avoid his haunts and are not supposed to go out alone when the light is failing

The Sphinx You do well to mind your own business, young man, and let me go my way

Oedipus Which way?

The Sphinx You're simply amazing. Must I give my reasons for being out to a complete stranger?

*Oedipus* And suppose I guessed your reason?

*The Sphinx* You amuse me

*Oedipus* Aren't you moved by curiosity, the curiosity which is raging amongst all modern young women, the curiosity to know what the Sphinx looks like? If he has claws, or a beak, or wings, and whether he takes after the tiger or the vulture?

*The Sphinx* Oh! come, come

*Oedipus* The Sphinx is the criminal of the day. Who's seen him? No one. Fabulous rewards are promised to the first person who discovers him. The faint of heart tremble. Young men die. But a girl, couldn't she venture into the forbidden area, setting orders at defiance, and dare what no reasonable person would dare, to unearth the monster, surprise him in his lair, get a view of him?

*The Sphinx* You're on the wrong track, I tell you. I'm going back to a relative who lives in the country, and as I had forgotten the very existence of a Sphinx and that the outskirts of Thebes are not safe, I was resting a moment on the stones of these old ruins. You see how far you're out.

*Oedipus* What a pity! For some time now I've only run across people as dull as ditchwater, so I hoped for something more unusual. Pardon me.

*The Sphinx* Good evening!

*Oedipus* Good evening! [*They pass each other. But OEDIPUS turns back*] I say! Pardon me. I may appear unpleasant, but, I must say, I can't bring myself to believe you. Your presence in these ruins still intrigues me enormously.

*The Sphinx* You're simply incredible.

*Oedipus* Because if you were like other guls, you would already have made off as fast as your legs would carry you.

*The Sphinx* My dear boy, you're quite absurd.

*Oedipus* It seemed to me so marvellous to find in a girl a worthy competitor.

*The Sphinx* A competitor? Then you are looking for the Sphinx?

*Oedipus* Looking for him? Let me tell you, I've been on the march for a whole month. Probably that's why I appeared ill-mannered just now. I was so wild with excitement as I drew near Thebes that I could have shouted my enthusiasm to the merest block of stone, when, instead of a block of stone, what stands in my path but a girl in

white. So I couldn't help talking to her about what was uppermost in my mind and attributing to her my own intentions.

*The Sphinx* But surely, a moment ago, when you saw me spring out of the shadow, you didn't seem to me very much on the alert, for a man who wants to measure his strength with the enemy.

*Oedipus* That is true. I was dreaming of fame, and the beast would have caught me unawares. Tomorrow in Thebes I shall equip myself and the hunt will begin.

*The Sphinx* You love fame?

*Oedipus* I'm not sure about that. I like trampling crowds, trumpet-calls, flying banners, waving palm-branches, the sun, gold and purple, happiness, luck—you know, to live!

*The Sphinx* Is that what you call living?

*Oedipus* Don't you?

*The Sphinx* No, I must say I have quite a different idea of life.

*Oedipus* What's that?

*The Sphinx* To love. To be loved by the one you love.

*Oedipus* I shall love my people and they me.

*The Sphinx* The public square is not a home.

*Oedipus* The public square has nothing to do with it. The people of Thebes are looking for a man. If I kill the Sphinx I shall be that man. Queen Jocasta is a widow, I shall marry her.

*The Sphinx* A woman who might be your mother!

*Oedipus* The important thing is that she is not.

*The Sphinx* Do you imagine that a queen and her people would give themselves up to the first comer?

*Oedipus* Would you call the vanquisher of the Sphinx a first comer? I know the promised reward is the queen. Don't laugh at me. Please listen. You must. I must prove that my dream isn't merely a dream. My father is King of Corinth. My father and mother were already old when I was born and I lived in a court of gloom. Too much fuss and comfort produced in me a feverish longing for adventure. I began to pine and waste away, when one evening a drunk shouted at me that I was a bastard and that I was usurping the place of a legitimate son. Blows and abuse followed, and the next day, despite the tears of Merope

and Polybius, I decided to visit the sanctuaries and question the gods. They all replied with the same oracle: you will murder your father and marry your mother.

*The Sphinx* What?

*Oedipus* Yes, I mean it. At first this oracle fills you with horror, but my head is firmly fixed on my shoulders! I reflected on the absurdity of the whole thing. I made allowances for the gods and the priests, and I came to this conclusion: either the oracle had a less serious meaning which had to be discovered, or the priests who communicate from temple to temple by means of birds found it perhaps to their advantage to put this oracle into the mouth of the gods and to weaken my chances of coming into power. Briefly, I soon forgot my fears, and, I own, profiting by this threat of parricide and incest, I fled the court so that I might satisfy my thirst for the unknown.

*The Sphinx* Now it's my turn to feel dazed. I'm sorry I rather made fun of you. Will you forgive me, Prince?

*Oedipus* Give me your hand. May I ask your name? Mine is Oedipus, I'm nineteen.

*The Sphinx* Oh! what does it matter about mine, Oedipus? You must like illustrious names. That of a little girl of seventeen wouldn't interest you.

*Oedipus* That's unkind.

*The Sphinx* You adore fame. Yet I should have thought the surest way of foiling the oracle would be to marry a woman younger than yourself.

*Oedipus* That doesn't sound like you. That's more like a mother of Thebes where marriageable young men are few.

*The Sphinx* And that's not like you either. That was a gross, common thing to say.

*Oedipus* So, I shall have walked the roads past mountain and stream merely to take a wife who will quickly become a Sphinx, worse than that, a Sphinx with breasts and claws!

*The Sphinx* Oedipus.

*Oedipus* No, thank you! I prefer to try my luck. Take this belt with that you will be able to get to me when I have killed the beast.

*The Sphinx* Have you ever killed?

*Oedipus* Yes, once. At the cross-roads of Delphi and Daulis. I was walking along

like a moment ago. A carriage was approaching driven by an old man with an escort of four servants. When I was on a level with the horses, one of them reared and knocked me into a serving-man. The fool tried to strike me, I aimed a blow at him with my stick, but he dodged down and I caught the old man on the temple. He fell and the horses bolted, dragging him along. I ran after them, the servants were terrified and fled, I found myself alone with the bleeding body of the old man and the horses who screamed as they rolled about entangled, and broke their legs. It was dreadful, dreadful.

*The Sphinx* Yes, isn't it. It's dreadful to kill.

*Oedipus* Oh, well, it wasn't my fault and I think no more about it. The thing is to clear all obstacles, to wear blinkers, and not to give way to self-pity. Besides, there is my star.

*The Sphinx* Then farewell, Oedipus. I am of the sex which is disturbing to heroes. Let us go our ways, we can have little in common.

*Oedipus* Disturbing to heroes, eh! You have a high opinion of your sex.

*The Sphinx* And supposing the Sphinx killed you?

*Oedipus* His death depends, if I'm not mistaken, on questions which I must answer. If I guess right he won't even touch me, he'll just die.

*The Sphinx* And if you do not guess right?

*Oedipus* Thanks to my unhappy childhood, I have pursued studies which give me a great start over the riff-raff of Thebes.

*The Sphinx* I'm glad to hear it.

*Oedipus* And I don't think this simple-minded monster is expecting to be confronted by a pupil of the best scholars of Corinth.

*The Sphinx* You have an answer to everything. A pity, for, I own, Oedipus, I have a soft spot for weak people, and I should like to have found you wanting.

*Oedipus* Farewell.

*[The SPHINX makes one step as if to rush in pursuit of OEDIPUS, stops, but cannot resist the call. Until her "I! I!" the SPHINX does not take her eyes off those of OEDIPUS, she moves as it were round this immobile, steady, vast*

*gaze from under eyelids which do not flicker]*

*The Sphinx* Oedipus!

*Oedipus* Did you call me?

*The Sphinx* One last word For the moment does nothing else occupy your mind, nothing else fire your heart, nothing stir your spirit save the Sphinx?

*Oedipus* Nothing else, for the moment

*The Sphinx* And he or she who brought you into his presence I mean who would help you I mean who may perhaps know something to help bring about this meeting would he or she in your eyes assume such prestige that you would be touched and moved?

*Oedipus* Naturally, but what does all this mean?

*The Sphinx* And supposing I, I myself, were to divulge a secret, a tremendous secret?

*Oedipus* You're joking!

*The Sphinx* A secret which would allow you to enter into contact with the enigma of enigmas, with the human beast, with the singing bitch, as it is called, with the Sphinx?

*Oedipus* What! You? You? Did I guess aright, and has your curiosity led you to discover ? No! How stupid of me This is a woman's trick to make me turn back

*The Sphinx* Good-bye

*Oedipus* Oh! Forgive me! . . .

*The Sphinx* Too late

*Oedipus* I'm kneeling, a simple fool who begs forgiveness

*The Sphinx* You're a fatuous young man who is sorry to have lost his chance and is trying to get it back

*Oedipus* I am and I'm ashamed Look, I believe you, I'll listen But if you have played me a trick, I shall drag you by the hair and grip you till the blood flows

*The Sphinx* Come here [*She leads him opposite the pedestal*] Shut your eyes Don't cheat Count up to fifty

*Oedipus* [*with his eyes shut*] Take care!

*The Sphinx* It's your turn to do that

[*OEDIPUS counts One feels that something extraordinary is happening The SPHINX bounds across the runs, disappears behind a wall and reappears in the real pedestal, that is, she seems to be fastened on to the pedestal, the bust resting on the elbows and looking*

*straight ahead, whereas the actress is really standing, and only lets her bust appear and her arms in spotted gloves with her hands grasping the edge, out of the broken wing suddenly grow two immense, pale, luminous wings and the fragment of statue completes her, prolonging her, and appearing to belong to her OEDIPUS is heard counting 47, 48, 49, then he makes a pause and shouts 50 He turns round*]

*Oedipus* You!

*The Sphinx* [*in a high distant voice, joyous and terrible*] Yes I! I, the Sphinx!

*Oedipus* I'm dreaming!

*The Sphinx* You are no dreamer, Oedipus You know what you want, and did want Silence. Here I command Approach

[*OEDIPUS, with his arms held stiffly by his body as if paralysed, tries frantically to free himself*]

*The Sphinx* Come forward [*OEDIPUS falls on his knees*] As your legs refuse their help, jump, hop It's good for a hero to make himself ridiculous Come along! Move yourself! Don't worry, there's nobody to see you

[*OEDIPUS, writhing with anger, moves forward on his knees*]

*The Sphinx.* That's it Stop! And now

*Oedipus.* And now, I'm beginning to understand your methods, what moves you make to lure and slay

*The Sphinx* . And now, I am going to give you a demonstration, I'm going to show you what would happen in this place, Oedipus, if you were any ordinary handsome youth from Thebes, and if you hadn't the privilege of pleasing me

*Oedipus* I know what your pleasantries are worth

[*He knits up all the muscles of his body It is obvious he is struggling against a charm*]

*The Sphinx* Yield! Don't try to screw up your muscles and resist Relax! If you resist you will only make my task more delicate and I might hurt you

*Oedipus* I shall resist!

[*He shuts his eyes and turns his head away*]

*The Sphinx* You need not shut your eyes or turn away your head For it is not by my look nor by my voice that I work

A blind man is not so dextrous, the net of a gladiator not so swift, nor lightning so fine, nor a coachman so stiff, nor a cow so weighty, nor a schoolboy working at his sums with his tongue out so good, nor a ship so hung with rigging, so spread with sails, secure and buoyant, a judge is not so incorruptible, insects so voracious, birds so bloodthirsty, the egg so nocturnal, Chinese executioners so ingenious, the heart so fitful, the trickster's hand so deft, the stars so fateful, the snake moistening its prey with saliva so attentive I secrete, I spin, I pay out, I wind, I unwind, I rewind, in such a way that it is enough for me to desire these knots for them to be made, to think about them for them to be pulled tight or slackened. My thread is so fine it escapes the eye, so fluid you might think you were suffering from a poison, so hard a quiver on my part would break your limbs, so highly strung a bow stroked between us would make music in the air, curled like the sea, the column and the rose, muscled like the octopus, contrived like the settings of our dreams, above all invisible, unseen, and majestic like the blood circulating in statues, my thread coils round you in fantastic patterns with the volubility of honey falling upon honey.

*Oedipus* Let me go!

*The Sphinx* And I speak, I work, I wind, I unwind, I calculate, I meditate, I weave, I winnow, I knit, I plait, I cross, I go over it again and again, I tie and untie and tie again, retaining the smallest knots that I shall later on have to untie for you on pain of death, I pull tight, I loosen, I make mistakes and go back, I hesitate, I correct, entangle and disentangle, unlace, lace up and begin afresh, and I adjust, I agglutinate, I pinion, I strap, I shackle, I heap up my effects, till you feel that from the tip of your toes to the top of your head you are wrapped round by all the muscles of a reptile whose slightest breath constricts yours and makes you inert like the arm on which you fall asleep.

*Oedipus* [in a weak voice] Let me be! Mercy!

*The Sphinx* And you will cry for mercy, and you won't have to be ashamed of that, for you won't be the first. I have heard prouder than you call for their mothers, and I have seen more insolent than you burst into tears, and the more silent are even

weaker than the rest they faint before the end and I have to minister to them after the fashion of embalmers in whose hands the dead are drunk men no longer able to stand on their feet!

*Oedipus* Merope! Mother!

*The Sphinx* Then, I should command you to advance a little closer, and I should help you by loosening your limbs. So! And I should question you. I should ask you, for example. What animal is it that goes on four legs in the morning, in the afternoon on two, and in the evening on three? And you would cudgel your brains, till in the end your mind would settle on a little medal you won as a child, or you would repeat a number, or count the stars between these two broken columns, and I should make you return to the point by revealing the enigma.

Man is the animal who walks on four legs when he is a child, on two when he is full-grown, and when he is old with the help of a stick as a third leg.

*Oedipus* How idiotic!

*The Sphinx* You would shout. How idiotic! You all say that. Then, since that cry only confirms your failure, I shall call my assistant, Anubis. Anubis!

[ANUBIS appears and stands on the right of the pedestal with folded arms and his head turned to one side]

*Oedipus* Oh! Sphinx. Oh! Sphinx, madam! Please, no! No!

*The Sphinx* And I should make you go down on your knees. Go on. Go on that's right. Do as you're told. And you'd bend your head and Anubis would bound forward. He would open his wolf-like jaws!

[OEDIPUS utters a cry]

I said *would* bend, *would* bound forward, *would* open. Haven't I always been careful to express myself in that mood? Why that cry? Why that horrified expression? It was a demonstration, Oedipus, simply a demonstration. You're free.

*Oedipus* Free!

[He moves an arm, a leg. He gets up, he reels, he puts his hand to his head.]

*Anubis* Pardon me, Sphinx, this man cannot leave here without undergoing the test.

*The Sphinx* But

*Anubis* Question him



*Oedipus* But

*Anubis* Silence! Question this man

[A silence OEDIPUS turns his back and remains motionless]

*The Sphinx* I'll question him. . . All right . . . I'll question him [With a last look of surprise at ANUBIS] What animal is it that walks on four legs in the morning, on two in the afternoon, and on three in the evening?

*Oedipus* Why, man, of course! He crawls along on four legs when he's little, and walks on two legs when he is big, and when he's old he helps himself along with a stick as a third leg

[The SPHINX sways on her pedestal]

*Oedipus* [making his way to the left] Victory!

[He rushes out left The SPHINX slips down into the column, disappears behind the wall, and reappears wingless]

*The Sphinx* Oedipus! Where is he? Where is he?

*Anubis* Gone, flown He is running breathlessly to proclaim his victory

*The Sphinx* Without so much as a look my way, without a movement betraying feeling, without a sign of gratitude

*Anubis* Did you expect anything else?

*The Sphinx* Oh, the fool! Then he has not understood a single thing

*Anubis* Not a single thing

*The Sphinx* Kss! Kss! *Anubis* Here, here, look, after him, quickly, bite him, *Anubis*, bite him!

*Anubis* And now it's all going to begin afresh You're a woman again and I'm a dog

*The Sphinx* I'm sorry I lost my head, I'm mad My hands are trembling I'm like fire I wish I could catch him again in one bound, I'd spit in his face, claw him with my nails, disfigure him, trample on him, castrate him, and flay him alive!

*Anubis* That's more like yourself

*The Sphinx* Help me! Avenge me! Don't stand there idle!

*Anubis* Do you really hate this man?

*The Sphinx* I do

*Anubis* The worst that could happen to him would seem too good to you?

*The Sphinx* It would

*Anubis* [holding up the SPHINX's dress] Look at the folds in this cloth Crush them together Now if you pierce this bundle with a pin, remove the pin, smooth the

cloth till all trace of the old creases disappears, do you think a simple country loon would believe that the innumerable holes recurring at intervals result from a single thrust of a pin?

*The Sphinx* Certainly not

*Anubis* Human time is a fold of eternity For us time does not exist From his birth to his death the life of Oedipus is spread flat before my eyes, with its series of episodes

*The Sphinx* Speak, speak, *Anubis*, I'm burning to hear What d'you see?

*Anubis* In the past Jocasta and Laius had a child As the oracle gave out that this child would be a scourge . . .

*The Sphinx* A scourge!

*Anubis* A monster, an unclean beast. . .

*The Sphinx* Quicker, quicker!

*Anubis* Jocasta bound it up and sent it into the mountains to get lost A shepherd of Polybius found it, took it away, and, as Polybius and Merope were lamenting a sterile marriage .

*The Sphinx* I can't contain myself for joy

*Anubis* They adopted it Oedipus, son of Laius, killed Laius where the three roads cross

*The Sphinx* The old man

*Anubis* Son of Jocasta, he will marry Jocasta

*The Sphinx* And to think I said to him "She might be your mother" And he replied "The important thing is that she is not" *Anubis*! *Anubis*! It's too good to be true

*Anubis* He will have two sons who will kill each other, and two daughters one of whom will hang herself Jocasta will hang herself

*The Sphinx* Stop! What more could I hope for? Think, *Anubis* the wedding of Jocasta and Oedipus! The union of mother and son . . . And will he know soon?

*Anubis* Soon enough

*The Sphinx* What a moment to live! I have a foretaste of its delights Oh! to be present!

*Anubis* You will be

*The Sphinx* Is that true? .

*Anubis* I think the moment has come to remind you who you are and what a ridiculous distance separates you from this little body which is listening to me You who have assumed the role of Sphinx! You, the

Goddess of Goddesses! You, the greatest of the great! The implacable! Vengeance! Nemesis! [ANUBIS prostrates himself]

*The Sphinx* Nemesis [She turns her back to the audience and remains a while erect, making a cross with her arms Suddenly she comes out of this hypnotic state and rushes up stage] Once more, if he is in sight, I should like to feed my hatred, I want to see him run from one trap to another like a stunned rat

*Anubis* Is that the cry of the awakening goddess or of the jealous woman?

*The Sphinx* Of the goddess, Anubis, of the goddess Our gods have cast me for the part of the Sphinx, and I shall show myself worthy of it

*Anubis* At last!

[The SPHINX looks down on the plain, leaning over to examine it Suddenly she turns round The last trace of the greatness and fury which had transformed her has disappeared]

*The Sphinx* Dog! you lied to me

*Anubis* I?

*The Sphinx* Yes, you! Liar! liar! Look along the road Oedipus is coming back, he's running, he's flying, he loves me, he has understood!

*Anubis* You know very well, Madam, what accompanies his success and why the Sphinx is not dead

*The Sphinx* Look how he jumps from rock to rock, just as my heart leaps in my breast

*Anubis* Convinced of his triumph and your death this young fool has just realized that in his haste he's forgotten the most important thing

*The Sphinx* Mean wretch! Do you mean to tell me he wants to find me dead?

*Anubis* Not you, my little fury the Sphinx. He thinks he's killed the Sphinx, he will have to prove it Thebes won't be satisfied with a fisherman's yarn

*The Sphinx* You're lying I'll tell him everything I'll warn him I'll save him I'll turn him away from Jocasta, from that miserable town

*Anubis* Take care

*The Sphinx* I shall speak

*Anubis* He's coming Let him speak first

[OEDIPUS, out of breath, comes in down stage, left He sees the SPHINX and ANUBIS standing side by side]

*Oedipus* [saluting] I'm happy to see, Madam, what good health the immortals enjoy after their death

*The Sphinx* What brings you back here?

*Oedipus* The collecting of my due

[Angry movement on the part of ANUBIS towards OEDIPUS, who steps back]

*The Sphinx* Anubis! [With a gesture she orders him to leave her alone He goes behind the runs To OEDIPUS] You shall have it Stay where you are The loser is a woman She asks one last favour of her master

*Oedipus* Excuse me for being on my guard, but you've taught me to distrust your feminine wiles

*The Sphinx* Ah! I was the Sphinx No, Oedipus

You will bear my mortal remains to Thebes and the future will reward you according to your deserts No

I ask you merely to let me disappear behind this wall so that I may take off this body in which, I must confess, I have, for some little while, felt rather cramped

*Oedipus* Very well But be quick At the last bugles . [The bugles are heard]

You see, I speak of them and they are sounded I must waste no time

*The Sphinx* [hidden] Thebes will not leave a hero standing at her gates

*Voice of Anubis* [from behind the runs] Hurry, Madam, hurry It looks as though you're inventing excuses and dawdling on purpose

*The Sphinx* [hidden] Am I the first, God of the Dead, whom you've had to drag by the clothes?

*Oedipus* . You're trying to gain time, Sphinx

*The Sphinx* [hidden] So much the better for you, Oedipus My haste might have served you ill A serious difficulty occurs to me If you bear into Thebes the body of a girl instead of the monster which the people expect, the crowd will stone you

*Oedipus* That's true! Women are simply amazing, they think of everything

*The Sphinx* [hidden] They call me The virgin with the claws The singing bitch They will want to identify my fangs Don't be alarmed Anubis!

My faithful dog! Listen, since our faces are only shadows, I want you to give me your jackal's head

*Oedipus* Splendid idea!

*Anubis* [hidden] Do what you like, so



long as this shameful play-acting may come to an end and you may become yourself once more

*The Sphinx* [hidden] I shan't be long

*Oedipus* I shall count up to fifty as I did before I'll have my own back

*Anubis* [hidden] Madam, Madam, what are you waiting for?

*The Sphinx* Now I'm ugly, Anubis A monster! . . . Poor boy . . . supposing I frighten him. . . .

*Anubis* Don't worry, he won't even see you

*The Sphinx* Is he blind then?

*Anubis* Many men are born blind and only realize it the day a home-truth hits them between the eyes

*Oedipus* Fifty!

*Anubis* [hidden] Go on . . . Go on

*The Sphinx* [hidden] Farewell, Sphinx  
[From behind the wall comes the staggering figure of a girl with a jackal's head She waves her arms in the air and falls]

*Oedipus* About time too! [He rushes forward, not stopping to look, lifts the body, and takes a stand down stage right He carries the body before him on his outstretched arms] No! not like that! I should look like that tragedian I saw in Corinth playing the part of a king carrying the body of his son The pose was pompous and moved no one.

[He tries holding the body under his left arm, behind the runs on the mound appear two giant forms covered with rainbow veils the gods]

*Oedipus* No! I should be ridiculous Like a hunter going home empty-handed after killing his dog

*Anubis* [the form on the right] To free your goddess's body of all human contamination, perhaps it might be as well for this *Oedipus* to disinfect you by bestowing on himself at least a title of demi-god

*Nemesis* [the form on the left]. He is so young . . .

*Oedipus* Hercules! Hercules threw the lion over his shoulder! . . . [He puts the body over his shoulder] Yes, over my shoulder Over my shoulder! Like a demi-god!

*Anubis* [veiled] Isn't he simply incredible!

*Oedipus* [moving off towards the left, taking two steps after each of his thanks-

*givings*] I have killed the unclean beast  
*Nemesis* [veiled] Anubis I feel very ill at ease

*Anubis* We must go

*Oedipus* I have saved the town!

*Anubis* Come along, mistress, let us go

*Oedipus* I shall marry Queen Jocasta!

*Nemesis* [veiled] Poor, poor, poor man-kind! I can stand no more, Anubis

I can't breathe Let us leave the earth

*Oedipus* I shall be king!

[A murmur envelopes the two huge forms The veils fly round them Day breaks Cocks crow]

### ACT THREE

#### THE WEDDING NIGHT

*The Voice* The coronation and nuptial celebrations have been going on since dawn The crowd has just acclaimed the queen and the conqueror of the Sphinx for the last time

Every one goes home In the little square of the royal palace now rises only the slight murmur of a fountain *Oedipus* and *Jocasta* find privacy at last in the nuptial chamber They are very tired and heavy with sleep In spite of a few hints and civilities on the part of destiny, sleep will prevent them from seeing the trap which is closing on them for ever

*The platform represents Jocasta's bedroom, which is as red as a little butcher's shop amid the town buildings A broad bed covered with white furs At the foot of the bed, an animal's skin On the right of the bed, a cradle*

*On the right fore-stage, a latticed bay window, looking on to the square of Thebes On the left fore-stage, a movable mirror of human size*

*OEDIPUS and JOCASTA are wearing their coronation costumes From the moment the curtain rises, they move about in the slow motion induced by extreme fatigue*

*Jocasta* Phew! I'm done! You are so active, dear! I am afraid, for you, this room will become a cage, a prison

*Oedipus* My dear love! A scented bedroom, a woman's room, yours! After this killing day, those processions, that ceremo-

mal, that crowd which still clamoured for us under our very windows

Jocasta Not clamoured for us . for you, dear

Oedipus Same thing

Jocasta You must be truthful, my young conqueror They hate me My dress annoys them, my accent annoys them, they are annoyed by my blackened eyelashes, my rouge, and my liveliness!

Oedipus It's Creon who annoys them! The cold, hard, inhuman Creon! I shall make your star rise again Ah! Jocasta! What a magnificent programme!

Jocasta It was high time you came I can't stand it any more

Oedipus Your room a prison! Your room, dear and our bed

Jocasta Do you want me to remove the cradle? After the death of the child, I had to have it near me, I couldn't sleep I was too lonely But now

Oedipus [*in an indistinct voice*] But now

Jocasta What?

Oedipus I said I said that it's he he the dog I mean the dog who won't the dog the fountain dog

[*His head droops*]

Jocasta Oedipus! Oedipus!

Oedipus [*awakens, startled*] What?

Jocasta You were falling asleep, dear!

Oedipus Me? Never

Jocasta Oh, yes, you were, dear You were telling me about a dog who won't a fountain-dog And I was listening

[*She laughs and herself seems to be becoming vague*]

Oedipus Nonsense!

Jocasta I was asking you if you wanted me to remove the cradle, if it worries you

Oedipus Am I such a kid as to fear this pretty muslin ghost? On the contrary, it will be the cradle of my luck My luck will grow in it beside our love until it can be used for our first son So you see!

Jocasta My poor love You're dropping with fatigue and here we stand

[*Same business as with OEDIPUS*] . stand on this wall

Oedipus What wall?

Jocasta This rampart wall [*She starts*] A wall What? I I [*Haggard*] What's happening?

Oedipus [*laughing*] Well, this time it's

you dreaming We're tired out, my poor sweet

Jocasta I was asleep? Did I talk?

Oedipus We are a pretty pair! Here I go telling you about fountain-dogs, and you tell me about rampart walls and this is our wedding night! Listen, Jocasta, if I happen to fall asleep again (are you listening?), do please awaken me, shake me, and if you fall asleep, I'll do the same for you This one night of all must not founder in sleep That would be too sad

Jocasta You crazy darling you, why? We have all our life before us.

Oedipus Maybe, but I don't want sleep to spoil the miracle of passing this joyous night alone, unutterably alone with you I suggest we remove these heavy clothes, and as we're not expecting any one . . .

Jocasta Listen, my darling boy, you'll be cross

Oedipus Jocasta, don't tell me there's still some official duty on the programme!

Jocasta While my women are doing my hair, etiquette demands that you receive a visit

Oedipus A visit? At this hour?

Jocasta A visit . . a visit . a purely formal visit

Oedipus In this room?

Jocasta In this room

Oedipus From whom?

Jocasta Now don't get cross. From Tiresias

Oedipus Tiresias? I refuse!

Jocasta Listen, dear

Oedipus That's the limit! Tiresias playing the part of the family pouring out their farewell advice How comic! I shall refuse his visit

Jocasta You crazy dear, I am asking you to It's an old custom in Thebes that the high priest must in some way bless the royal marriage bonds And besides, Tiresias is our old uncle, our watch-dog I am very fond of him, Oedipus, and Larus adored him He is nearly blind It would be unfortunate if you hurt his feelings and set him against our love

Oedipus That's all very well . in the middle of the night

Jocasta Do! Please, for our sake and the sake of the future It's essential See him for five minutes, but see him and listen to him I ask you to [*She kisses him*]

*Oedipus* I warn you I shan't let him sit down

*Jocasta* I love you, dear [*Long kiss*] I shall not be long [*At the right-hand exit*] I am going to let him know he can come Be patient Do it for my sake Think of me. [*She goes out*]

[*OEDIPUS, alone, looks at himself in the mirror and tries attitudes Tiresias comes in left, unheard OEDIPUS sees him in the middle of the room and turns about face*]

*Oedipus* I am listening

*Tiresias* Steady, my lord Who told you I had saved up a sermon for your especial benefit?

*Oedipus* No one, Tiresias, no one But I don't suppose you find it pleasant acting as kill-joy I suggest you are waiting for me to pretend I have received your advice I shall bow, and you will give me the accolade That would be enough for us in our tired state and at the same time custom would be satisfied Have I guessed right?

*Tiresias* It is perhaps correct that there is at the bottom of this procedure a sort of custom, but for that, it would be necessary to have a royal marriage with all the dynastic, mechanical, and, I admit, even irksome business which that entails No, my lord Unforeseen events bring us face to face with new problems and duties And you will agree, I think, that your coronation, and your marriage, appear in a form which is difficult to classify, and does not fit into any code

*Oedipus* No one could say more graciously that I have crashed on Thebes like a tile from a roof

*Tiresias* My lord!

*Oedipus* You must know, then, that classifiable things reek of death You must strike out in other spheres, Tiresias, quit the ranks That's the sign of masterpieces and heroes An original, that's the poison to astonish and to rule

*Tiresias* Right! Then you will admit that, as I have taken on a job outside the ceremonial sphere, I am striking out on a new line for myself

*Oedipus* To the point, Tiresias, to the point

*Tiresias* Good Then I'll go straight to the point and speak in all frankness My lord, your auguries look black, very black I must put you on your guard

*Oedipus* Well, if I didn't expect that! Anything else would have surprised me This is not the first time the oracles have set about me and my audacity has thwarted them

*Tiresias* Do you believe they can be thwarted?

*Oedipus* I am the living proof of it And even if my marriage upsets the gods, what about your promises, your freeing of the town, and the death of the Sphinx? And why should the gods have pushed me on as far as this room, if this marriage displeases them?

*Tiresias* Do you think you can solve the problem of free will in a minute? Ah! power, I fear, is going to your head

*Oedipus* And power is slipping away from you

*Tiresias* Take care! You are speaking to a high priest

*Oedipus* Take care yourself, high priest Must I remind you that you are speaking to your king?

*Tiresias* To the husband of my queen, my lord

*Oedipus* Jocasta notified me a little while ago that her power is to pass into my hands, in full Say that to your master

*Tiresias* I serve only the gods

*Oedipus* Well, if you prefer that way of putting it, say that to the person who is awaiting your return

*Tiresias* Headstrong youth! You don't understand me

*Oedipus* I understand perfectly well an adventurer is in your way I expect you hope I found the Sphinx dead on my path The real conqueror must have sold it to me, like those hunters who buy the hare from a poacher And supposing I have paid for the mortal remains, whom will you find ultimately as the conqueror of the Sphinx? The same type of person who has been threatening you every minute and preventing Creon from sleeping a poor second-class soldier whom the crowd will bear in triumph and who will claim his due [*shouting*] his due!

*Tiresias* He would not dare

*Oedipus* Ah! you see! I have made you say it That's the secret of the intrigue There go your beautiful promises That is what you were counting on

*Tiresias* The queen is more to me than my own daughter I must watch over her

and defend her She is weak, credulous, romantic

Oedipus You are insulting her

Tiresias I love her

Oedipus She is in need of no one's love but mine

Tiresias About this love, Oedipus, I demand an explanation Do you love the queen?

Oedipus With all my being

Tiresias I mean do you love to take her in your arms?

Oedipus I love most of all to be taken in her arms

Tiresias I appreciate the delicate distinction You are young, Oedipus, very young Jocasta might be your mother I know, oh! I know, you are going to reply

Oedipus I am going to reply that I have always dreamed of such a love, an almost motherly love

Tiresias Oedipus, aren't you confusing love and love of glory? Would you love Jocasta if she were not on a throne?

Oedipus A stupid question which is always being asked Would Jocasta love me if I was old, ugly, and had not appeared out of the unknown? Do you fancy you cannot be infected by love through touching purple and gold? Are not the privileges of which you speak of the very substance of Jocasta, an organic part of her? We have been each other's from all eternity Within her body lies fold after fold of a purple mantle which is much more regal than the one she fastens on her shoulders I love and adore her,

Tiresias At her side, I seem to occupy at last my proper place She is my wife, she is my queen I possess her, I shall keep her, I shall find her again, and neither by prayers nor threats can you drag from me obedience to orders from heaven knows where

Tiresias Think it over again, Oedipus The omens and my own wisdom give me every reason to fear this wild marriage Think it over

Oedipus Rather late, don't you think?

Tiresias Have you had experience of women?

Oedipus Not the slightest And to complete your astonishment and cover myself with ridicule in your eyes, I am a virgin

Tiresias You!

Oedipus The high priest of a capital is

astonished that a country boy should put all his pride in keeping himself pure for a single offering You would, no doubt, have preferred a degenerate prince, a puppet, so that Creon and the priests could work the strings

Tiresias You are going too far!

Oedipus Must I order you again

Tiresias Order? Has pride sent you mad?

Oedipus Don't put me into a rage! My patience is at an end, my temper is ungovernable, and I am capable of any unpremeditated act

Tiresias What arrogance! . . Weak and arrogant!

Oedipus You will have brought it on yourself

[He throws himself upon Tiresias, seizing him by the neck]

Tiresias Let me go . Have you no shame?

Oedipus You are afraid that I could, from your face, there, there, close up, and in your blind man's eyes, read the real truth about your behaviour

Tiresias Murderer! Sacrilege!

Oedipus Murderer! I ought to be One day, I shall probably have to repent for this foolish respect, and if I dared Oh! oh! Why! Gods! look here here in his blind man's eyes, I had no idea it was possible

Tiresias Let me go! Brute!

Oedipus The future! My future, as in a crystal bowl

Tiresias You will repent

Oedipus I see, I see Soothsayer, you have lied! I shall marry Jocasta A happy life, rich, prosperous, two sons daughters and Jocasta still as beautiful, still the same, in love, a mother in a palace of happiness Now it's not so clear, not clear I want to see! It's your fault, soothsayer . I want to see! [He shakes him]

Tiresias Curse you!

Oedipus [suddenly recoiling, letting Tiresias go, and putting his hands over his eyes] Oh! filthy wretch! I am blind He's thrown pepper at me Jocasta! Help! Help!

Tiresias I threw nothing, I swear You are punished for your sacrilege

Oedipus [writhing on the ground] You lie!

*Tiresias* You wanted to read by force the secrets my diseased eyes hold and that I myself have not yet interpreted, and you are punished

*Oedipus* Water, water, quickly, it's burning me . . .

*Tiresias* [*laying his hands over OEDIPUS' face*] There, there . . . Be a good boy

I forgive you Your nerves are on edge Come, keep still Your sight will return, I swear I expect you got to the point which the gods wish to keep in darkness, or they may be punishing you for your impudence

*Oedipus*. I can see a little . . . I think

*Tiresias* Are you in pain?

*Oedipus* Less . . . the pain is going Ah! it was like fire, red pepper, a thousand pinpoints, a cat's paw scrabbling in my eye Thank you

*Tiresias* Can you see?

*Oedipus* Not clearly, but I can see, I can see Phew! I really thought I was blind for good and that it was one of your kind of tricks Besides, I rather deserved it

*Tiresias* It's nice to believe in miracles when miracles suit us, and when they don't, it's nice to believe in them no longer but say it is a trick on the part of the soothsayer

*Oedipus* Forgive me I am of a violent and vindictive disposition I love Jocasta I was waiting for her, impatiently, and this extraordinary phenomenon, all those images of the future in the pupil of your eyes put me under a spell, made me dizzy—as if I was drunk

*Tiresias* Can you see better now? It is an almost blind man asking you

*Oedipus* Quite, and I have no more pain Heavens, I'm ashamed of my conduct towards an infirm old man and a priest Will you accept my apologies?

*Tiresias* I was only speaking for your own good and Jocasta's

*Oedipus* *Tiresias*, in a way I owe you something in return, a confession that is difficult to make, and which I had promised myself I would make to no one

*Tiresias* A confession?

*Oedipus* I noticed during the coronation ceremony that you and Creon were making signs to one another Do not deny it Well, I wished to keep my identity secret, but I gave it up Listen carefully, *Tiresias* I am not a wanderer I come from Corinth

I am the only child of King Polybius and Queen Merope A nobody will not soil this marriage bed I am a king and son of a king

*Tiresias* My lord [*He bows*] A word from you would have cleared the atmosphere of the uneasiness created by your incognito My little girl will be so glad

*Oedipus* But wait! I ask you as a favour to safeguard at least this last night Jocasta still loves in me the wanderer dropped out of the clouds, the young man stepping suddenly out of the shadows It will unfortunately be only too easy to destroy this mirage tomorrow In the meantime, I hope the queen will become sufficiently submissive for her to learn without disgust that Oedipus is not a prince fallen from the sky, but merely a prince

I wish you good evening, *Tiresias* Jocasta will be on her way back I am dropping with fatigue and we want to remain in intimacy together This is our desire

*Tiresias* My lord, excuse me [*OEDIPUS makes a sign to him with his hand TIRESIAS stops at the left-hand exit*] One last word

*Oedipus* [*loftily*] What is it?

*Tiresias* Forgive my boldness This evening, after the closing of the temple, a beautiful young girl came into the private chapel where I work and, without a word of excuse, handed me this belt and said "Give it to Lord Oedipus and repeat word for word this sentence Take this belt with that you will be able to get to me when I have killed the beast" I had scarcely tucked away the belt when the girl burst out laughing and disappeared, but I couldn't make out in what direction

*Oedipus* [*snatching away the belt*] And that's your trump card You have already built up a whole system in order to destroy my hold on the queen's head and heart How should I know? A previous promise of marriage . . . A girl takes her revenge

The temple scandal Tell-tale find . . .

*Tiresias* I was fulfilling my commission That's all

*Oedipus* Miscalculation and bad policy Go and carry this bad news with all speed to Prince Creon [*TIRESIAS stays on the threshold*] He reckoned he was going to scare me! But in point of fact, it is I who

scare you, Tiresias, I scare you I can see it written in large letters on your face It wasn't so easy to terrorize the child Confess that the child terrifies you, grandpa! Confess, grandpa! Confess I terrify you! Confess at least I make you afraid!

[OEDIPUS is lying face down on the animal-skin TIRESIAS is standing like a bronze statue Silence Then thunder]

Tiresias Yes Very afraid [He leaves, walking backwards His prophetic voice can be heard] Oedipus! Oedipus! listen to me You are pursuing classic glory There is another kind obscure glory, the last resource of the arrogant person who persists in opposing the stars

[OEDIPUS remains looking at the belt When JOCASTA comes in, in her night-dress, he quickly hides the belt under the animal-skin]

Jocasta Well now? What did the old bogy say? He must have tormented you Oedipus Yes no

Jocasta He's a monster He must have proved to you that you are too young for me

Oedipus You are beautiful, Jocasta I

Jocasta That I am old

Oedipus He rather gave me to understand that I loved your pearls, and your diadem

Jocasta Always damaging everything! Spoiling everything! Doing harm!

Oedipus But you can take it from me, he didn't manage to scare me On the contrary, I scared him He admitted that

Jocasta Well done! My love! You, dear, after my pearls and diadem!

Oedipus I am happy to see you again without any pomp, without your jewels and orders, white, young, and beautiful, in our loving room

Jocasta Young! Oedipus! . . . You mustn't tell lies . . .

Oedipus Again

Jocasta Don't scold me

Oedipus Yes, I shall scold you! I shall scold you because a woman like you ought to be above such nonsense A young girl's face is as boring as a white page on which my eyes can read nothing moving, whereas your face! I must have the scars, the tattooing of destiny, a beauty which has weathered tempests Why should you be afraid of crows' feet, Jocasta? What would

a silly little girl's look or smile be worth beside your remarkable face, struck by fate, marked by the hangman, and tender, tender and

[He notices that JOCASTA is weeping] Jocasta! my dear little girl, you're crying! Whatever's the matter? . . . Oh, look here . . . What have I done? Jocasta! . . .

Jocasta Am I so old then . . . so very old?

Oedipus My dear crazy girl! It's you who persist in . . .

Jocasta Women say things to be contradicted They always hope it isn't true

Oedipus My dear Jocasta! . . . How silly I am! What a clumsy bear I am Darling Calm yourself, and kiss me

. . . I meant

Jocasta Never mind . . . I am being ridiculous [She dries her eyes]

Oedipus It's all my fault

Jocasta It isn't . . . There the black is running into my eye now [OEDIPUS coaxes her] It's all over

Oedipus Quick, a smile [Slight rumbling of thunder] Listen

Jocasta My nerves are bad because of the storm

Oedipus The sky is so bright with stars, so pure

Jocasta Yes, but there is a storm brewing somewhere When the fountain makes a still murmur like silence, and my shoulder aches, there is always a storm about and summer lightning

[She leans against the bay window Summer lightning]

Oedipus Come here, quickly

Jocasta Oedipus! come here a moment

Oedipus What is it?

Jocasta The sentry look, lean out On the bench on the right, he's asleep Don't you think he's handsome, that boy? with his mouth wide open

Oedipus I'll teach him to sleep I'll throw some water in his open mouth

Jocasta Oedipus!

Oedipus How dare he sleep when guarding the queen!

Jocasta The Sphinx is dead and you're alive Let him sleep in peace! May all the town sleep in peace! May they all sleep every one!

Oedipus Lucky sentry!

Jocasta Oedipus! Oedipus! I should

like to make you jealous, but it isn't that  
This young guard

*Oedipus* What is so extraordinary about this young guard then?

*Jocasta* During that famous night, the night of the Sphinx, while you were encountering the beast, I had an escapade on the ramparts with Tiresias. I had heard that a young soldier had seen the spectre of Laius, and that Laius was calling for me to warn me of a threatening danger. Well, that soldier was the very sentry who is guarding us.

*Oedipus* Who is guarding us! . . . Any way . . . Let him sleep in peace, my kind *Jocasta*. I shall guard you all right on my own. Of course, not the slightest sign of the spectre of Laius.

*Jocasta* Not the slightest, I'm sorry to say . . . Poor lad! I touched his shoulders and legs, and kept saying to Zizi, "Touch, touch," and I was in a state . . . because he was like you. And it's true, you know, *Oedipus*, he was like you.

*Oedipus* You say "This guard was like you." But, *Jocasta*, you didn't know me then, it was impossible for you to know or to guess . . .

*Jocasta* Yes, indeed, that's true. I expect I meant to say my son would be about his age. [Silence] Yes. I am getting muddled. It's only now that this likeness strikes me. [She shakes off this uneasy feeling] You're a dear, you're good-looking, I love you. [After an attitude] *Oedipus*!

*Oedipus* My goddess!

*Jocasta* I approve of your not telling the story of your victory to Creon or to Tiresias, or to everybody [with her arms round his neck], but to me . . . to me!

*Oedipus* [freeing himself] I had your promise! . . . And but for that boy.

*Jocasta* Is the *Jocasta* of yesterday the *Jocasta* of now? Haven't I a right to share your memories without anybody else knowing anything about it?

*Oedipus* Of course.

*Jocasta* And do you remember, you kept saying "No, no, *Jocasta*, later, later when we are in our loving room." Well, aren't we in our loving room?

*Oedipus* Persistent monkey! Charmer! She always ends by getting what she wants. Now he still . . . I am beginning.

*Jocasta* Oh, *Oedipus*! *Oedipus*! What fun! What fun! I'm quite still.

[*Jocasta* lies down, shuts her eyes, and keeps still. *Oedipus* begins lying, hesitating, inventing, accompanied by the storm]

*Oedipus* Now I was nearing Thebes. I was following the goat-track which rounds the hill to the south of the town. I was thinking of the future, of you whom I imagined less beautiful than you are in reality, but still, very beautiful, painted, and sitting on a throne in the centre of a group of ladies-in-waiting. Supposing you do kill it, I thought, would you, *Oedipus*, dare to ask for the promised reward? Should I dare to go near the queen? And I kept walking and worrying myself, when all of a sudden I came to a halt. My heart was beating hard. I had just heard a sort of song. The voice that sang it was not of this world. Was it the Sphinx? My haversack contained a knife. I slipped the knife under my tunic and crept along. Do you happen to know the ruins of a little temple on that hill, with a pedestal and the hind-quarters of a chimera? [Silence] *Jocasta*.

*Jocasta* . . . Sleeping?

*Jocasta* [awaking with a start] What? *Oedipus* . . .

*Oedipus* You were sleeping.

*Jocasta* I wasn't.

*Oedipus* Oh, yes, you were. There's a fickle little girl for you! She demands a story and then goes and falls asleep in the middle of it instead of listening.

*Jocasta* I heard it all. You're mistaken. You were speaking of a goat-track.

*Oedipus* A long way past the goat-track!

*Jocasta* Don't be angry, darling. Are you cross with me?

*Oedipus* Me?

*Jocasta* Yes, you are cross with me, and rightly. What a stupid silly I am! That's what age does for you.

*Oedipus* Don't be sad. I'll start the story again, I promise you, but first of all you and I must lie down side by side and sleep a little. After that, we shall get out of this glue and this struggle against sleep which is spoiling everything. The first one to wake up will wake the other. Promise.

*Jocasta* Promised. Poor queens know how to sleep sitting, for a minute between two audiences. But give me your hand. I am too old, Tiresias was right.

*Oedipus* Perhaps so for Thebes, where girls are marriageable at thirteen. Then



what about me? Am I an old man? My head is drooping, I am woken up by my chin hitting my chest

*Jocasta* You? That's quite different, it's the dustman, as children say! But as for me You begin to tell me the most marvellous story in the world and I go and doze away like a grandma beside the fire And you will punish me by never beginning it over again, and finding excuses Did I talk?

*Oedipus* Talk? No I thought you were being very attentive You naughty girl, have you some secrets you are afraid you might disclose to me during your sleep?

*Jocasta* I was simply afraid of those foolish things that we sometimes say when sleeping

*Oedipus* You were resting as good as gold So long, my little queen

*Jocasta* So long, my king, my love

*[Hand in hand, side by side, they shut their eyes and fall into the heavy sleep of people who struggle against sleep]*

*A pause The fountain soliloquizes*

*Slight thunder Suddenly, the lightning becomes the lightning of dreams*

*The dream of Oedipus The animal-skin is pushed up It is lifted by the head of ANUBIS He shows the belt at the end of his outstretched arm*

*OEDIPUS tosses about and turns over!*

*Anubis [in a slow mocking voice]*

Thanks to my unhappy childhood, I have pursued studies which give me a great

start over the riff-raff of Thebes, and I don't think this simple-minded monster is expecting to be confronted by a pupil of the

best scholars of Corinth But if you have played a trick on me, I shall drag you by

the hair *[Up to a howl]* I shall drag you by the hair,

I shall grip you till the blood flows!

I shall grip you till the blood flows!

*Jocasta [dreaming]* No, not that paste, not that foul paste!

*Oedipus [in a distant, muffled voice]* I shall count up to fifty one, two, three, four,

eight, seven, nine, ten, ten, eleven, fourteen,

five, two, four, seven, fifteen, fifteen, fifteen,

fifteen, three, four

*Anubis* And Anubis would bound forward He would open his wolf-like jaws!

*[He disappears under the platform The animal-skin resumes its normal appearance]*

*Oedipus* Help me! Help! Help! Come to me! Everybody! Come here!

*Jocasta* What? What is it? Oedipus! my darling! I was sleeping like a lump! Wake up!

*[She shakes him]*

*Oedipus [struggling and talking to the Sphinx]* Oh! Madam, Madam! Mercy, Madam! Mercy Madam! No! No! No! No, Madam!

*Jocasta* My pet, don't scare me so It's a dream This is me, me, Jocasta, your wife, Jocasta

*Oedipus* No, no! *[He awakes]* Where was I? How ghastly! Jocasta, is that you?

What a nightmare, what a horrible nightmare!

*Jocasta* There, there, it's all over, you are in our room, dear, in my arms

*Oedipus* Didn't you see anything? Really, how silly I am, it was that animal-skin

Phew! I must have talked What did I say?

*Jocasta* It's your turn now You were shouting "Madam! No, no, Madam! No,

Madam Mercy, Madam!" Who was that wicked woman?

*Oedipus* I've forgotten now What a night!

*Jocasta* And as for me! Your shouts saved me from an unspeakable nightmare

Look! You're soaked through, swimming in perspiration It's my fault I let you go

to sleep in all those heavy clothes, golden chains, clasps, and those sandals which cut your heel

*[She lifts him up He falls back]* Come along! What a big baby!

I can't possibly leave you in this state Don't make yourself heavy, help me

*[She lifts him up, takes off his tunic and rubs him down]*

*Oedipus [still in a vague state]* Yes, my little darling mother

*Jocasta [mocking him]* "Yes, my little darling mother"

"What a child! Now he's taking me for his mother"

*Oedipus [awake]* Oh, forgive me, Jocasta, my love, I am being so silly You see

I'm half asleep, I mix up everything I was thousands of miles away with my

mother who always thinks I'm too cold or too hot You're not cross?

*Jocasta* Silly boy! Let me see to you, and sleep away All the time he's excusing himself and asking forgiveness My word!

What a polite young man! He must have



been taken care of by a very kind mother, very kind, and then you go and leave her, there But I mustn't complain of that I love with all the warmth of a woman in love that mother who petted you and kept you and brought you up for me, for us

*Oedipus* Sweet

*Jocasta* I should say so! Your sandals Raise your left leg [*She takes off his sandals*] And now the right [*Same business, suddenly she utters a terrible cry*]

*Oedipus* Hurt yourself?

*Jocasta* No no . . .

[*She recoils, and stares like a mad creature at OEDIPUS' feet*]

*Oedipus* Ah! my scars I didn't know they were so ugly My poor darling, did they alarm you?

*Jocasta* Those holes . . . how did you get them? They must come from such serious injuries

*Oedipus* From the hunt, I think I was in the woods, my nurse was carrying me Suddenly from a clump of trees a wild boar broke cover and charged her She lost her head and let me go I fell and a wood-cutter killed the animal while it was belabouring me with its tusks . . . It's true! But she is as pale as a ghost! My darling! I ought to have warned you I'm so used to them myself, those awful holes I didn't know you were so sensitive

*Jocasta* It's nothing . . .

*Oedipus* Weariness and sleepiness put us into this state of vague terror you had just come out of a bad dream

*Jocasta* No, *Oedipus* No As a matter of fact, those scars remind me of something I am always trying to forget

*Oedipus* I always strike unlucky

*Jocasta* You couldn't possibly know It's to do with a woman, my foster-sister and linen-maid She was with child at the same age as myself, at eighteen She worshipped her husband despite the difference of age and wanted a son But the oracles predicted so fearful a future for the child that, after giving birth to a son, she had not the courage to let it live

*Oedipus* What?

*Jocasta* Wait Imagine what strength of mind a poor woman must have to do away with the life of her life the son from her womb, her ideal on earth and love of loves

*Oedipus* And what did this woman do?

*Jocasta* With death in her heart, she bored holes in the feet of the nursing, tied them, carried it secretly to a mountain-side and abandoned it to the wolves and bears

[*She hides her face*]

*Oedipus* And the husband?

*Jocasta* Everyone thought the child had died a natural death, and that the mother had buried it with her own hands

*Oedipus* And . . . this woman still lives?

*Jocasta* She is dead

*Oedipus* So much the better for her, for my first example of royal authority would have been to inflict on her, publicly, the worst tortures, and afterwards, to have her put to death

*Jocasta* The oracles were clear and matter-of-fact Before those things a woman always feels so stupid and helpless

*Oedipus* To kill! [*Recalling LARUS*] Of course, it isn't infamous to kill when carried away by the instinct of self-defence, and when bad luck is involved But basely to kill in cold blood the flesh of one's flesh, to break the chain . . . to cheat in the game!

*Jocasta* *Oedipus*, let's talk about something else . . . your furious little face upsets me too much

*Oedipus* Yes, let's talk about something else I should be in danger of loving you less if you tried to defend this miserable wretch

*Jocasta* You're a man, my love, a free man and a chief! Try and put yourself in the place of a child-mother who is credulous about the oracles, worn out, disgusted, confined, and terrified by the priests

*Oedipus* A linen-maid! That's her only excuse Would you have done it?

*Jocasta* [*with a gesture*] No, of course not

*Oedipus* And don't run away with the idea that to fight the oracles requires a herculean determination I could boast and pose as a wonder, I should be lying You know, to thwart the oracles, I only had to turn my back on my family, my longings, and my country But the farther I got from my native town, and the nearer I came to yours, the more I felt I was returning home

*Jocasta* *Oedipus*! *Oedipus*, that little mouth of yours which chatters away, that little wagging tongue, those frowning eye-

brows and fiery eyes! Couldn't the eyebrows relax a little Oedipus and the eyes close gently for once and that mouth be used for softer caresses than words?

Oedipus There I go again! A bear, a great bear, and a clumsy one at that!

Jocasta You are a child!

Oedipus I'm not a child!

Jocasta Now lies off again! There, there, be a good boy!

Oedipus You're right! I'm behaving very badly! Calm this talkative mouth with yours, and these feverish eyes with your fingers!

Jocasta One moment! I'll bat the grating! I don't like to know that grating open at night!

Oedipus I'll go!

Jocasta You stay lying down! I'll take a look in the mirror at the same time! Do you want to embrace a fright? After all this excitement, the gods alone know what I look like! Don't make me nervous! Don't look at me! Turn the other way, Oedipus!

Oedipus I'm turning over! *[He lies across the bed with his head on the edge of the cradle]* There, I'm shutting my eyes!

*[Jocasta goes to the window]*

Jocasta *[to Oedipus]* The little soldier is still asleep, he's half-naked! and it isn't warm tonight! poor lad!

*[She goes to the movable mirror, suddenly, she stops, listening in the direction of the square. A DRUNK is talking very loud with long pauses between his reflections]*

Voice of the Drunk Politics!

Politics! What a mess! They just tickle me to death! Ho! Look! a dead'un! Sorry, a mistake! 's a soldier asleep! Salute! Salute the sleeping army!

*[Silence. JOCASTA stands on her toes, and tries to see outside]*

Voice of the Drunk Politics! *[Long silence]* It's a disgrace! a disgrace!

Jocasta Oedipus, my dear!

Oedipus *[in his sleep]* Hi!

Jocasta Oedipus! Oedipus! There's a drunk and the sentry doesn't hear him! I hate drunks! I want him sent away, and the soldier woken up! Oedipus! Oedipus! Please!

*[She shakes him]*

Oedipus I wind I unwind I calculate I meditate, I weave I unweave, I knit, I plait, I cross,

Jocasta What's he saying? How beautifully he sleeps! I might die, he wouldn't notice it!

The Drunk Politics!

*[As soon as the first line is over, JOCASTA leaves Oedipus, putting her head back on the edge of the cradle, and goes to the middle of the room. She is tired.]*

Madam, what ever are you at?

Madam, what ever are you at?

Your husband's much too young,

Much too young for you, that's

flat! I bid .

La retors

Jocasta Oh! The beasts!

The Drunk Madam, what ever are you at!

With this holy marriage?

*[During what follows, JOCASTA, bewildered, goes to the window on tip-toe. Then she returns to the bed, and leaning over Oedipus, watches his face, but still looking from time to time in the direction of the window, when the voice of the DRUNK alternates with the murmur of the fountain and the corkscrews. She lulls the sleep of Oedipus by gently rocking the cradle.]*

The Drunk Now, if I were in politics

I'd say to the queen Madam!

a minor can't be your man! Take a husband who's serious, sober, and strong! a husband like me!

Voice of the Guard *[who has just awakened. He gradually recovers his self-assurance]* Move on!

Voice of the Drunk Salute the waking army!

The Guard Move on! And look sharp!

The Drunk You might at least be polite!

*[As soon as the GUARD is heard, JOCASTA leaves the cradle, having first muffled Oedipus' head in the cushion.]*

The Guard D'you want me to stop your mouth?

The Drunk Always politics! What a mess!

Madam, what ever are you at?

The Guard Come on, hop it! Clear off!

been taken care of by a very kind mother, very kind, and then you go and leave her, there But I mustn't complain of that I love with all the warmth of a woman in love that mother who petted you and kept you and brought you up for me, for us

*Oedipus* Sweet

*Jocasta* I should say so! Your sandals Raise your left leg [*She takes off his sandals*] And now the right [*Same business, suddenly she utters a terrible cry*]

*Oedipus* Hurt yourself?

*Jocasta* No . no

[*She recoils, and stares like a mad creature at OEDIPUS' feet*]

*Oedipus* Ah! my scars . I didn't know they were so ugly My poor darling, did they alarm you?

*Jocasta* Those holes . how did you get them? . . They must come from such serious injuries

*Oedipus* From the hunt, I think I was in the woods, my nurse was carrying me Suddenly from a clump of trees a wild boar broke cover and charged her She lost her head and let me go I fell and a wood-cutter killed the animal while it was belabouring me with its tusks . . . It's true! But she is as pale as a ghost! My darling! I ought to have warned you I'm so used to them myself, those awful holes I didn't know you were so sensitive

*Jocasta* It's nothing . .

*Oedipus* Weariness and sleepiness put us into this state of vague terror you had just come out of a bad dream

*Jocasta* No, *Oedipus* No As a matter of fact, those scars remind me of something I am always trying to forget

*Oedipus* I always strike unlucky

*Jocasta* You couldn't possibly know It's to do with a woman, my foster-sister and linen-maid She was with child at the same age as myself, at eighteen She worshipped her husband despite the difference of age and wanted a son But the oracles predicted so fearful a future for the child that, after giving birth to a son, she had not the courage to let it live

*Oedipus* What?

*Jocasta* Wait Imagine what strength of mind a poor woman must have to do away with the life of her life the son from her womb, her ideal on earth and love of loves

*Oedipus* And what did this woman do?

*Jocasta* With death in her heart, she bored holes in the feet of the nursing, tied them, carried it secretly to a mountain-side and abandoned it to the wolves and bears

[*She hides her face*]

*Oedipus* And the husband?

*Jocasta* Everyone thought the child had died a natural death, and that the mother had buried it with her own hands

*Oedipus* And this woman still lives?

*Jocasta* She is dead

*Oedipus* So much the better for her, for my first example of royal authority would have been to inflict on her, publicly, the worst tortures, and afterwards, to have her put to death

*Jocasta* The oracles were clear and matter-of-fact Before those things a woman always feels so stupid and helpless

*Oedipus* To kill! [*Recalling LAIUS*] Of course, it isn't infamous to kill when carried away by the instinct of self-defence, and when bad luck is involved But basely to kill in cold blood the flesh of one's flesh, to break the chain to cheat in the game!

*Jocasta* *Oedipus*, let's talk about something else your furious little face upsets me too much

*Oedipus* Yes, let's talk about something else I should be in danger of loving you less if you tried to defend this miserable wretch

*Jocasta* You're a man, my love, a free man and a chief! Try and put yourself in the place of a child-mother who is credulous about the oracles, worn out, disgusted, confined, and terrified by the priests

*Oedipus* A linen-maid! That's her only excuse Would you have done it?

*Jocasta* [*with a gesture*] No, of course not

*Oedipus* And don't run away with the idea that to fight the oracles requires a herculean determination I could boast and pose as a wonder, I should be lying You know, to thwart the oracles, I only had to turn my back on my family, my longings, and my country But the farther I got from my native town, and the nearer I came to yours, the more I felt I was returning home

*Jocasta* *Oedipus*! *Oedipus*, that little mouth of yours which chatters away, that little wagging tongue, those frowning eye-

brows and fiery eyes! Couldn't the eyebrows relax a little, Oedipus and the eyes close gently for once, and that mouth be used for softer carresses than words?

*Oedipus* There I go again. A bear, a great bear, and a clumsy one at that.

*Jocasta* You are a child

*Oedipus* I'm not a child

*Jocasta* Now he's off again! There, there, be a good boy

*Oedipus* You're right. I'm behaving very badly. Calm this talkative mouth with yours, and these feverish eyes with your fingers

*Jocasta* One moment. I'll shut the grating. I don't like to know that gratings open at night

*Oedipus* I'll go

*Jocasta* You stay lying down. I'll take a look in the mirror at the same time. Do you want to embrace a fright? After all this excitement, the gods alone know what I look like. Don't make me nervous. Don't look at me. Turn the other way, *Oedipus*

*Oedipus* I'm turning over. [*He lies across the bed with his head on the edge of the cradle*] There, I'm shutting my eyes

[*Jocasta goes to the window*]

*Jocasta* [*to Oedipus*] The little soldier is still asleep, he's half-naked and it isn't warm tonight. poor lad!

[*She goes to the movable mirror, suddenly, she stops, listening in the direction of the square. A DRUNK is talking very loud with long pauses between his reflections*]

*Voice of the Drunk* Politics!

*Pol—tics!* What a mess! They just tickle me to death! . . . Ho! Look! a dead'un! Sorry, a mistake. 's a soldier asleep. Salute! Salute the sleeping army!

[*Silence. JOCASTA stands on her toes, and tries to see outside*]

*Voice of the Drunk* Politics! [*Long silence*] It's a disgrace. a disgrace

*Jocasta* Oedipus, my dear!

*Oedipus* [*in his sleep*] Hi!

*Jocasta* Oedipus! Oedipus! There's a drunk and the sentry doesn't hear him. I hate drunks. I want him sent away, and the soldier woken up. Oedipus! Oedipus! Please!

[*She shakes him*]

*Oedipus* I wind, I unwind, I calculate. I meditate, I weave, I winnow, I knit, I plant, I cross,

*Jocasta* What's he saying? How beautifully he sleeps! I might die, he wouldn't notice it

*The Drunk* Politics!

[*He sings. As soon as the first lines are sung, JOCASTA leaves OEDIPUS putting his head back on the edge of the cradle, and goes to the middle of the room. She listens*]

Madam, what ever are you at?

Madam, what ever are you at?

Your husband's much too young,

Much too young for you, that's

flat! . . . Flat

Et cetera

*Jocasta* Oh! The beasts

*The Drunk* Madam, what ever are you at

With this holy marriage?

[*During what follows, JOCASTA, bewildered, goes to the window on tip-toe. Then she returns to the bed, and leaning over OEDIPUS, watches his face, but still looking from time to time in the direction of the window, where the voice of the DRUNK alternates with the murmur of the fountain and the cockerows. She lulls the sleep of Oedipus by gently rocking the cradle*]

*The Drunk* Now, if I were in politics I'd say to the queen. Madam!

a minor can't be your man. Take a husband who's serious, sober, and strong. a husband like me.

*Voice of the Guard* [*who has just awakened. He gradually recovers his self-assurance*] Move on!

*Voice of the Drunk* Salute the waking army!

*The Guard* Move on! And look sharp!

*The Drunk* You might at least be polite.

[*As soon as the GUARD is heard, JOCASTA leaves the cradle, having first muffled OEDIPUS' head in the cushion*]

*The Guard* D'you want me to stop your mouth?

*The Drunk* Always politics! What a mess!

Madam, what ever are you at?

*The Guard* Come on, hop it! Clear off!

*The Drunk* I'm clearing off, I'm clearing off, but you might be polite about it

[*During these remarks, JOCASTA goes to the mirror. She cannot see herself owing to the moonlight conflicting with the dawn. She takes the mirror by its supports and moves it away from the wall. The mirror itself stays fastened to the scenery. JOCASTA drags the frame along, trying to get some light, glancing at OEDIPUS who sleeps on. She brings the piece of furniture carefully into the foreground, opposite the prompter's box, so that the public becomes her mirror and JOCASTA looks at herself in full view of all.*]

*The Drunk* [very distant]

Your husband's much too young,  
Much too young for you, that's  
flat! Flat!

[*Sound of the SENTRY's footsteps, bugle-calls, cockcrows, a kind of snoring noise from the rhythmic, youthful breathing of OEDIPUS. JOCASTA, with her face up against the empty mirror, lifts her cheeks by handfuls.*]

## ACT FOUR

### OEDIPUS REX

(17 years later)

*The Voice* Seventeen years soon pass. The great plague in Thebes seems to be the first set-back to that renowned good luck of Oedipus. For their infernal machine to work properly, the gods wanted all ill-luck to appear in the guise of good luck. After delusive good fortune, the king is to know true misfortune and supreme consecration, which, in the hands of the cruel gods, makes of this playing-card king, in the end, a man.

*Cleared of the bedroom, the red hangings of which are pulled away into the flies, the platform seems to be surrounded by walls which grow in size. It finally represents an inner courtyard. By a balcony high up JOCASTA's room is made to communicate with this court. One gets to it through an open door below, in the centre.*

*When the curtain rises, OEDIPUS, aged, and wearing a little beard, stands near to the door. TIRESIAS and CREON are standing on the right and left of the court. Centre right, a young boy rests one knee on the ground: he is the MESSENGER from Corinth.*

*Oedipus* What have I done to shock people now, Tiresias?

*Tiresias* You are enlarging on things, as usual. I think, and I'll say again, it might be more decent to learn of a father's death with less joy.

*Oedipus* Indeed. [*To the MESSENGER*] Don't be afraid, boy. Tell me, what was the cause of Polybius' death? Is Merope so very terribly unhappy?

*Messenger* King Polybius died of old age, my lord, and . . . the queen, his wife, is barely conscious. She is so old she can't fully realize even her misfortune.

*Oedipus* [*his hand to his mouth*] Jocasta! Jocasta!

[*JOCASTA appears on the balcony, she parts the curtain. She is wearing her red scarf.*]

*Jocasta* What is it?

*Oedipus* How pale you are! Don't you feel well?

*Jocasta* I admit that what with the plague, the heat, and visits to the hospitals I feel quite exhausted. I was resting on my bed.

*Oedipus* This messenger has brought me great news, worth disturbing you for.

*Jocasta* [*astonished*] Good news?

*Oedipus* Tiresias blames me for finding it good. My father is dead.

*Jocasta* Oedipus!

*Oedipus* The oracle told me I should be his murderer, and that I should be the husband of my mother. Poor Merope! she is very old, and my father, Polybius, has died a good natural death!

*Jocasta* The death of a father is never a happy event, as far as I know.

*Oedipus* I hate play-acting and conventional tears. To be quite genuine, I was so young when I left my father and mother, that I no longer have any particular feelings for them.

*Messenger* Lord Oedipus, if I may . . .

*Oedipus* You may, my boy.

*Messenger* Your indifference is not really indifference. I can explain it to you.

*Oedipus* Something new?

*Messenger* I ought to have begun at the end of the story. On his death-bed, the king of Corinth asked me to tell you that you are only his adopted son.

*Oedipus* What?

*Messenger* My father, one of Polybius' shepherds, found you on a hill, at the mercy . . .

of wild beasts He was a poor man, he carried his find to the queen who used to weep because she had no children This is how the honour of performing such an extraordinary mission at the Theban court has fallen to me

*Tiresias* This young man must be exhausted after his journey, and he has crossed our town which is full of unhealthy stench Perhaps it would be better if he took some refreshment and rested before being questioned

*Oedipus* No doubt, *Tiresias*, you would like the torture to last You think my world is tottering You don't know me well enough Don't you rejoice too soon Perhaps I am happy to be a child of fortune

*Tiresias* I was only putting you on your guard against your sinister habit of questioning, seeking to know and understand everything

*Oedipus* Whether I am a child of the muses or of a common tramp, I shall question without fear, I will know things

*Jocasta* *Oedipus*, my love, he is right You get excited You get excited and you believe everything you're told, and then afterwards

*Oedipus* Upon my word! That's the last straw! Unflinchingly I withstand the hardest knocks, and you all plot to make me put up with these things and not try to find out where I come from

*Jocasta* Nobody is plotting my love but I know

*Oedipus* You're wrong, *Jocasta* Nobody knows me at present, neither you, nor I, nor any one else [To the MESSENGER] Don't tremble, my lad Speak up Tell us more

*Messenger* That's all I know, Lord *Oedipus*, except that my father untied you when you were half-dead, hanging by your wounded feet from a short branch

*Oedipus* Oh! so that's how we came by those fine scars!

*Jocasta* *Oedipus*, *Oedipus*, dear come up here Anybody would think you enjoy plunging knives into your wounds

*Oedipus* And so those were my swaddling clothes! My story of the hunt is false, like so many others Well, if that's the way things are I may come of a god of the woods and a dryad,

and have been nourished by wolves Don't you rejoice too soon, *Tiresias*!

*Tiresias* You do me an injustice

*Oedipus* At any rate, I haven't killed *Polybius*, but now I come to think of it I have killed a man

*Jocasta* You!

*Oedipus* Yes! I! Oh! you needn't be alarmed It was accidental, and sheer bad luck! Yes, I have killed, soothsayer, but as for parricide, you'd better officially give it up During a brawl with the serving-men, I killed an old man at the cross-roads of Delphi and Daulis

*Jocasta* At the cross-roads of Delphi and Daulis!

[*She disappears as if drowning*]

*Oedipus* There's marvellous material for you to build up a really fine catastrophe That traveller must have been my father "Heavens, my father!" But incest won't be so easy, gentlemen What do you think, *Jocasta*? [He turns round and sees *Jocasta* has disappeared] Splendid! Seventeen years of happiness, and a perfect reign, two sons, two daughters, and then this noble lady only has to learn that I am the stranger whom, by the way, she first loved, and she turns her back on me Let her sulk! Let her sulk! I shall be left alone with my fate

*Creon* Your wife, *Oedipus*, is ill The plague is demoralizing us all The gods are punishing the town and desire a victim A monster is hiding in our midst They demand he shall be found and driven out Day after day the police have failed and the streets are littered with corpses Do you realize what an effort you are asking of *Jocasta*? Do you realize that you are a man and that she is a woman, an aging woman at that, and a mother who is disturbed about the contagion? Before blaming *Jocasta* for a movement of impatience, you might have tried to excuse her

*Oedipus* I see what you are getting at, brother The ideal victim, the monster in hiding From one coincidence to another wouldn't it be a pretty job, with the help of the priests and the police, to succeed in muddling the people of Thebes and make them believe I am that monster!

*Creon* Don't be absurd

*Oedipus* I think you're capable of anything, my friend But *Jocasta*, that's another matter I am astonished at her

attitude [*He calls her*] Jocasta! Jocasta!  
Where are you?

*Tiresias* She looked as though her nerves  
were all on edge She is resting let  
her be

*Oedipus* I am going [*He goes to-*  
*ward the MESSENGER*] Now, let us come to  
the point

*Messenger* My lord!

*Oedipus* Holes in my feet . bound  
. on the mountain-side . . . How did  
I fail to understand at once? . . . And then  
I wondered why Jocasta .

It's very hard to give up enigmas . .  
Gentlemen, I was not the son of a dryad  
Allow me to introduce you to the son of a  
linen-maid, a child of the people, a native  
product

*Creon* What's this all about?

*Oedipus* Poor Jocasta! One day I un-  
wittingly told her what I thought of my  
mother . I understand everything now  
She must be terrified, and utterly desperate  
In short . wait for me I must question  
her at all costs, leaving nothing in the dark,  
so that this horrible farce may come to an  
end

[*He leaves by the middle door CREON*  
*immediately rushes to the MESSENGER,*  
*whom he pushes out through the door*  
*on the right*]

*Creon* He is mad What does all this  
mean?

*Tiresias* Don't move A storm is coming  
to us from the most distant ages The thun-  
derbolt is aimed at this man, and I ask you,  
Creon, to let the thunderbolt follow its  
whims, to wait motionless and not to inter-  
fere in the slightest

[*Suddenly OEDIPUS is seen on the bal-*  
*cony, stranded and aghast He leans*  
*on the wall with one hand*]

*Oedipus* You have killed her for me

*Creon* What do you mean, killed?

*Oedipus* You have killed her for me  
That's where she is, hanging hanging  
by her scarf . She is dead gentle-  
men, she is dead It's all over . all  
over

*Creon* Dead? I'm coming

*Tiresias* Stay here the priest orders  
you to It's inhuman, I know, but the  
circle is closing, we must keep silent and  
'please stay here

*Creon* You wouldn't stop a brother  
from

*Tiresias* I would! Let the story be  
Keep out of it

*Oedipus* [*at the door*] You have killed  
her for me she was romantic . weak  
. ill . you forced me to say I was a  
murderer Whom did I murder, gentle-  
men, I ask you? . . through clumsiness,  
mere clumsiness just an old man on  
the road a stranger

*Tiresias* Oedipus through mere clumsi-  
ness you have murdered Jocasta's husband,  
King Laius

*Oedipus* Mean wretches! . I can see  
it now! You are carrying on your plot! .  
it was even worse than I thought . You  
have made my poor Jocasta believe that I  
was the murderer of Laius that I killed  
the king to set her free and so that I could  
marry her

*Tiresias* Oedipus, you have murdered  
Jocasta's husband, King Laius I have  
known it for a long time, and you are tell-  
ing lies I haven't said a word about it  
either to you or to her or to Creon or to  
any one else This is how you reward me  
for my silence

*Oedipus* Laius! . So that's it  
I am the son of Laius and of the linen-maid  
The son of Jocasta's foster-sister and Laius  
*Tiresias* [*to CREON*] If you want to  
now's the time Quickly There are limits  
even to harshness

*Creon* Oedipus, through you, my sister is  
dead I only kept silent to save the life of  
Jocasta I think it is useless to prolong un-  
necessarily the false mystery and the un-  
ravelling of a sordid drama whose intrigue  
I have finally succeeded in discovering

*Oedipus* Intrigue?

*Creon* The most secret of secrets are  
betrayed one day or another to the deter-  
mined seeker The honest man, sworn to  
silence, talks to his wife, who talks to an  
intimate friend, and so on [*In to the*  
*wings*] Come in, shepherd

[*An old SHEPHERD comes in, trembling*]

*Oedipus* Who is this man?

*Creon* The man who carried you bleed-  
ing and bound onto the mountain-side ac-  
cording to your mother's orders Let him  
confess

*Shepherd* To speak means death to me  
Princes, why haven't I died before so as not  
to live through this minute?

*Oedipus* Whose son am I, old man?  
Strike, strike, quickly!



*Shepherd* Alas

*Oedipus* I am near to the sound of something that should not be heard

*Shepherd* And I to the saying of something that should not be said

*Creon* You must say it I wish you to

*Shepherd* You are the son of Jocasta, your wife, and of Laius, killed by you where the three roads cross Incest and parricide, may the gods forgive you!

*Oedipus* I have killed whom I should not I have married whom I should not I have perpetuated what I should not All is clear

[*He goes out*]

[*CREON drives out the SHEPHERD*]

*Creon* Who was the linen-maid and foster-sister he was talking about?

*Tiresias* Women cannot hold their tongues Jocasta must have made out that her crime had been committed by a servant to see what effect it had on Oedipus

[*He holds his arm and listens with bent head Forbidding murmur The little ANTIGONE, with hair dishevelled, appears on the balcony*]

*Antigone* Uncle! Tiresias! Come up, quickly! Hurry, it's horrible! I heard shrieks inside, mother dear doesn't move any more, she has fallen like a log, and father dear is writhing over her body and stabbing at his eyes with her big golden brooch There's blood everywhere I'm frightened! I'm too frightened, come up come up, quickly

[*She goes in*]

*Creon* This time nothing shall prevent me

*Tiresias* Yes, I shall I tell you, Creon, the finishing touches are being put to a masterpiece of horror Not a word, not a gesture It would be unkind for us to cast over it so much as a shadow of ourselves

*Creon* Sheer madness!

*Tiresias* Sheer wisdom . You must admit

*Creon* Impossible As for the rest, power falls once more into my hands

[*He frees himself, and at the very moment when he bounds forward, the door opens OEDIPUS appears, blind ANTIGONE is clinging to his clothes*]

*Tiresias* Stop!

*Creon* I shall go mad! Why, but why has he done that? Better have killed himself

*Tiresias* His pride does not let him down

He wanted to be the happiest of men, now he wants to be the most unhappy

*Oedipus* Let them drive me out, let them finish me off, stone me, strike down the foul beast!

*Antigone* Father!

*Tiresias* Antigone! My soothsaying staff! Offer it to him from me It will bring him some luck

[*ANTIGONE kisses the hand of TIRESIAS and carries the staff to Oedipus*]

*Antigone* Tiresias offers you his staff

*Oedipus* Is he there? I accept it, Tiresias I accept it Do you re-

member, eighteen years ago, I saw in your eyes that I should become blind and I couldn't understand it? I see it all clearly now, Tiresias, but I am in pain I suffer The journey will be hard

*Creon* We must not let him cross the town, it would be an awful scandal

*Tiresias* [*in a low voice*] In a town of plague? And besides, you know, they saw the king Oedipus wished to be, they won't see the king he is now

*Creon* Do you mean he will be invisible because he is blind?

*Tiresias* Almost

*Creon* Well, I can tell you I have had enough of your riddles and symbols My head is firmly fixed on my shoulders and my feet planted firmly on the ground I shall give orders

*Tiresias* Your police may be well organized, Creon, but where this man goes they will not have the slightest power

*Creon* I

[*TIRESIAS seizes his arm and puts his hand over his mouth For JOCASTA appears in the doorway JOCASTA, dead, white, beautiful, with closed eyes Her long scarf is wound round her neck*]

*Oedipus* Jocasta! You, dear! You alive!

*Jocasta* No, Oedipus I am dead You can see me because you are blind, the others cannot see me

*Oedipus* Tiresias is blind

*Jocasta* Perhaps he can see me faintly but he loves me, he won't say anything

*Oedipus* Wife, do not touch me!

*Jocasta* Your wife is dead, hanged, Oedipus I am your mother It's your mother who is coming to help you How



would you even get down these steps alone, my poor child?

*Oedipus* Mother!

*Jocasta* Yes, my child, my little boy

Things which appear abominable to human beings, if only you knew, from the place where I live, if only you knew how unimportant they are!

*Oedipus* I am still on this earth

*Jocasta* Only just

*Creon* He is talking with phantoms, he's delirious I shall not allow that little girl

*Tiresias* They are in good care

*Creon* Antigone! Antigone! I am calling you

*Antigone* I don't want to stay with my uncle! I don't want to, I don't want to stay in the house Dear father, dear father, don't leave me! I will show you the way, I will lead you

*Creon* Thankless creature

*Oedipus* Impossible, Antigone You must be a good girl I cannot take you with me

*Antigone* Yes, you can!

*Oedipus* Are you going to desert your sister Ismene?

*Antigone* She must stay with Eteocles and Polynices Take me away, please! Please! Don't leave me alone! Don't leave me with uncle! Don't leave me at home!

*Jocasta* The child is so pleased with herself She imagines she is your guide Let her think she is Take her Leave everything to me

*Oedipus* Oh!

[*He puts his hand to his head*]

*Jocasta* Are you suffering, dear?

*Oedipus* Yes, in the head, the neck, the arms . . . It's fearful

*Jocasta* I'll give you a dressing at the fountain

*Oedipus* [*breaking down*] Mother

*Jocasta* Who would have believed it? That wicked old scarf and that terrible brooch! Didn't I say so time and again?

*Creon* It's utterly impossible I shall not allow a mad-man to go out free with Antigone It is my duty to

*Tiresias* Duty! They no longer belong to you, they no longer come under your authority

*Creon* And pray whom should they belong to?

*Tiresias* To the people, poets and unspoiled souls

*Jocasta* Forward! Grip my dress firmly don't be afraid

[*They start off*]

*Antigone* Come along, father dear let's go

*Oedipus* Where do the steps begin?

*Jocasta and Antigone* There is the whole of the platform yet

[*They disappear . . . JOCASTA and ANTIGONE speak in perfect unison*]

*Jocasta and Antigone* Careful count the steps One, two, three, four, five

*Creon* And even supposing they leave the town, who will look after them, who will admit them?

*Tiresias* Glory

*Creon* You mean rather dishonour, shame

*Tiresias* Who knows?

THE END

# THE ASCENT OF F 6

A TRAGEDY IN TWO ACTS

By W H AUDEN AND CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

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## AUDEN AND ISHERWOOD AND THE POETIC THEATER

WYANSTAN HUGH AUDEN, poet, critic, and playwright, was born in York, England, in 1907, his collaborator on *The Ascent of F 6* and other plays, Christopher Isherwood, was born in Cheshire in 1904. Auden had attended Oxford, begun his poetic career, and written his first play, *The Dance of Death*, before joining talents with Isherwood. The latter, after his graduation from Cambridge, spent several years teaching English in Berlin, returning to London as a journalist and film writer. It was while working together on a film that the two men, the one a poet, the other a writer of fiction, determined to collaborate on a play, a fantasy, *The Dog Beneath the Skin* (1935). This was followed in the next year by *The Ascent of F 6*. Their dramatic collaboration came to an end in 1939 with *On the Frontier*.

All three plays, together with *The Dance of Death*, are interesting examples of the attempt in the mid-thirties to find a suitable dramatic form for modern poetry, very much as the poets of the Romantic Revival from Wordsworth to Shelley had sought to revive poetic drama in the early nineteenth century. The modern poets, however, have had greater practical success—their plays have been produced, and even re-produced. If none is likely to become an item of the standard repertory, at least the experiments of such men as T. S. Eliot, Stephen Spender, and Auden-Isherwood have extended the limits of the drama and made audiences aware once more of the power of poetic speech. The enthusiastic support of such producing groups as the Westminster and Mercury theatres in London and the college and little theatres of America has been an added factor in the comparative success of the movement.

Commenting on the work of another dramatist, Auden has incidentally stated the problem which confronts the poet in the contemporary theatre. "The modern artist is in a dilemma. If he has beliefs, realizing that he cannot assume them in his audience, he is tempted to underline them in his work and to become a preacher of pious religious or political sermons to the faithful. If he has none, he is drawn either like Wagner to a mythical symbolism, or like *Time* magazine to realistic reporting, evading the problem of belief by presenting something which is as ambiguous as life itself and so putting the audience *vis-à-vis* his work in the same situation as he is toward life." Disregarding "realistic reporting," Auden and Isherwood turned to a "mythical symbolism" for the substance of their first play, and to musical comedy for its form.

*The Dog Beneath the Skin* is a modern version of the medieval quest. The hero is sent in search of a missing person. Provided with magic formulas, he overcomes various obstacles ("dragons") and returns at the end to claim his reward, the hand of a lady of high estate. The romantic aspects of the quest have, not unexpectedly, been shorn away. *The Dog Beneath the Skin* is a frontal attack on modern society, employing the burlesque types of the comic strip and the cynical vulgarity of the music hall. The audience is guided through what might be a confusing plot by a non-dramatic chorus which establishes scene and atmosphere and underlines ideas in some of Auden's most effective verse.

*The Ascent of F 6* marks a considerable advance both in form and in content. Many of the non-dramatic features of the earlier play have been eliminated—the chorus, for example, is given a local habitation and a name—and the characters are more human, more fully rounded, and less the one-dimensional caricatures of *The Dog*. The plot is, once again, laid in a land of myth, of the Lawrence-of-Arabia variety, with its romantic aspects removed. The music-hall technique has been curbed to serve the artistic ends of the theme, as one critic wrote, to "illuminate and enrich the understanding in emotional exaltation." The poetry is dramatic, and the action (though highly symbolic in the final scenes), clear.

The key to the meaning of the play must be sought in the character of Michael Ransom. It may be read quite simply as the tragedy of the individual in a capitalist, imperialist world, or as the tragedy of spiritual pride. It should not, however, be confused with *The Silver Cord* as an attack on maternal domination. The mother symbol is here extended to

a larger symbol in which power (the eternal womb) stands for the mother of humanity, and the great womb itself in the end becomes the demon, death

*The Ascent of F 6* was first produced at the Mercury Theater, London, in 1937 with William Devlin in the role of Ransom. It has since been repeatedly performed in this country, perhaps most notably by the Harvard Dramatic Club

#### CHARACTERS

MICHAEL FORSYTH RANSOM  
 SIR JAMES RANSOM, *his twin brother*  
 LADY ISABEL WELWYN  
 GENERAL DELLABY-COUCH  
 LORD STAGMANTLE  
 DAVID GUNN  
 IAN SHAWCROSS  
 EDWARD LAMP  
 DOCTOR THOMAS WILLIAMS  
 MRS RANSOM, *mother of Michael and James*  
 THE ABBOT  
 MR A  
 MRS A  
 ANNOUNCER  
 BLAVEK  
 MONKS

## THE ASCENT OF F 6

### ACT ONE

#### SCENE ONE

*The summit of the Pillar Rock, above Wastdale Late afternoon*

MICHAEL RANSOM is seated, reading a pocket volume of Dante

Ransom [reads] "O brothers!" I said, "who through a hundred thousand dangers have reached the West, deny not, to this brief vigil of your senses that remains, experience of the unpeopled world behind the Sun. Consider your origin: ye were not formed to live like brutes, but to follow virtue and knowledge" [Putting down the book] Virtue and knowledge! One can picture Ulysses' audience: a crook speaking to crooks. Scedy adventurers, of whose expensive education nothing remained but a few grammatical tags and certain gestures of the head, refugees from the consequences of vice or eccentric and conceited opinions, natural murderers whom a peaceful winter had reduced to palsied wrecks, the ugly and cowardly who foresaw in a virgin land an era of unlimited and effortless indulgence, teachers without pupils, tormentors without victims, parasites without hosts, lunatic missionaries, orphans.

And glad they must have been to believe it, during the long uneventful voyage westward: yes, even up to the very end, when the last deceptions were choked from each in turn by the strangling Atlantic. Who was Dante—to whom the Universe was peopled only by his aristocratic Italian acquaintances and a few classical literary characters, the fruit of an exile's reading—who was Dante, to speak of Virtue and Knowledge? It was not Virtue those lips, which involuntary privation had made so bitter, could pray for, it was not Knowledge, it was Power. Power to exact for every snub, every headache, every unfallen beauty, an absolute revenge, with a stroke of the pen to make a neighbour's vineyard a lake of fire and to create in his private desert the austere music of the angels or the happy ex-

travagance of a fair. Friends whom the world honours shall lament their eternal losses in the profoundest of crevasses, while he on the green mountains converses gently with his unapproachable love.

Virtue Knowledge We have heard these words before, and we shall hear them again—during the nursery luncheon on the prize-giving afternoon, in the quack advertisement, at the conference of generals or industrial captains justifying every baseness and excusing every failure, comforting the stilted schoolboy lives, charming the wax-like and baroque, inflaming the obstinate and the odd and all those hungry and cheerful persons whom the holiday now discharges into these lake-filled valleys radiating from the rocky hub on which I sit.

Beyond the Isle of Man, behind the towers of Peel Castle, the sun slides now towards the creasing sea, and it is into a Wastwater utterly in shadow that the screes now make their unhalting plunge. Along the lake shores lovers pace, each wrapped in a disturbing and estranging vision. In the white house among the pines coffee will be drunk, there will be talk of art at the weekend. Under I cannot tell how many of these green slate roofs, the stupid peasants are making their stupid children.

Nevertheless, let me receive such vigour as the impassive embraces of this sullen rock afford, from which no mastery can elicit a gratifying response, nor defeat sighs capable of despairing misinterpretation. Here is no knowledge, no communication, no possession, nothing that a bishop could justify, a stockbroker purchase or an elderly scientist devote years to explaining—only the voluntary homage paid by the living to the unqualified and dangerous dead. Let me pay it, then, pay it now, before I descend to the valley and all its varieties of desperation: the calculations of shopkeepers under the gasflares and the destructive idleness of the soldier, the governess in the dead of night giving the Universe nought for behaviour and the abandonment of the prophet to the merciless curiosity of a demon, the plotting of diseases to establish an

epoch of international justice and the struggle of beauty to master and transform the most recalcitrant features, the web of guilt that prisons every upright person and all those thousands of thoughtless jailers from whom Life pants to be delivered—myself not least, all swept and driven by the possessive incompetent fury and the disbelief O, happy the foetus that miscarries and the frozen idiot that cannot cry "Mama"! Happy those run over in the street today or drowned at sea, or sure of death tomorrow from incurable diseases! They cannot be made a party to the general fiasco For of that growth which in maturity had seemed eternal it is now no tint of thought or feeling that has tarnished, but the great ordered flower itself is withering, its life-blood dwindled to an unimportant trickle, stands under heaven now a fright and ruin, only to crows and larvae a gracious refuge

*Voice of Shawcross [from below]* Where are you, M F?

*Voice of Gunn* When you've finished saying your prayers, we should like to go down!

*Voice of Shawcross* It'll be dark soon, if we don't make a start

*Ransom [shouting back]* All right! I'm coming!

*[He begins to descend as the curtain falls]*

*The Stage-box, right, is illuminated*  
MRS A *is discovered cooking*

Mrs A Evening A slick and unctuous Time

Has sold us yet another shop-soiled day,  
Patently rusty, not even in a gaudy box  
I have dusted the six small rooms

The parlour, once the magnificent image of my freedom,

And the bedroom, which once held for me  
The mysterious languors of Egypt and the terrifying Indias

The delivery-vans have paid their brief impersonal visits

I have eaten a scrappy lunch from a plate on my knee

I have spoken with acquaintances in the Stores,

Under our treble gossip heard the menacing throb of our hearts

As I hear them now, as all of us hear them,  
Standing at our stoves in these villas, expecting our husbands

The drums of an enormous and routed army,  
Throbbing raggedly, fitfully, scatteredly,  
madly

We are lost We are lost

*[Enter Mr A from work]*

Mr A Has anything happened?

Mrs A What should happen?

The cat has died at Ivy Dene,  
The Crowthers' pimply son has passed Matric,

St Neots has put up light blue curtains,  
Frankie is walking out with Winnie  
And Georgie loves himself What should happen?

Nothing that matters will ever happen

Mr A No, nothing that matters will ever happen,

Nothing you'd want to put in a book,  
Nothing to tell to impress your friends—  
The old old story that never ends  
The eight o'clock train, the customary place,  
Holding the paper in front of your face,  
The public stairs, the glass swing-door,  
The peg for your hat, the linoleum floor,  
The office stool and the office jokes  
And the fear in your ribs that slyly pokes  
Are they satisfied with you?

Nothing interesting to do,  
Nothing interesting to say,  
Nothing remarkable in any way;  
Then the journey home again

In the hot suburban train  
To the tawdry new estate,  
Crumpled, grubby, dazed and late  
Home to supper and to bed

Shall we be like this when we are dead?

Mrs A It's time for the news, John  
Turn on the wireless

Mr A I'm sick of the news All you can hear

Is politics, politics everywhere  
Talk in Westminster, talk at Geneva, talk  
in the lobbies and talk on the throne,  
Talk about treaties, talk about honour, mad  
dogs quarrelling over a bone

What have they ever done, I ask you?

What are they ever likely to do

To make life easier, make life happier?

What have they done for me or for you?

Mrs A Smiling at all the photographers,  
smoking, walking in top hats down by the lake,

Treating the people as if they were pigeons,  
giving the crumbs and keeping the cake  
When will they notice us? When will they

flatter us? When will they help us?  
 When there's a war!  
 Then they will ask for our children and kill  
 them, sympathize deeply and ask for  
 some more  
 Mr A Night after night we have lis-  
 tened to the ignoble news  
 Mrs A We have heard  
 The glib justification of the sorry act  
 Mr A The frantic washing of the grimy  
 fact  
 Mrs A But nothing to bring a smile to  
 the face  
 Mr A Nothing to make us proud of our  
 race  
 Mrs A Nothing we should have been  
 glad to have done  
 In a dream, or would wish for an only son  
 Mr A Nothing to take us out of our-  
 selves,  
 Out of the oppression of this city,  
 This abstract civic space imposed upon the  
 fields,  
 Destroying that tie with the nearest which  
 in Nature rules  
 Mrs A Where we are unable to lose  
 sight of the fruits of our extraordinary  
 industry  
 Mr A And everything is emphatically  
 provided  
 The Dial Exchange and the voice of the lift  
 We must accept them all and there is no  
 one to thank  
 Mrs A Give us something to be thank-  
 ful for  
 Mr A Give it quickly  
 I have read "Too Late" in the hands of the  
 office clock  
 Mrs A I have received singular warn-  
 ings  
 In the eyes of the beggar I have experienced  
 the earthquake and the simoom  
 Mr A Sitting in the crowded restaurant,  
 I have overheard the confabulations of  
 weasels  
 Mrs A Give us something to live for  
 We have waited too long  
 [The Stage-box is darkened]

## SCENE TWO

SIR JAMES RANSOM'S room at the Colonial  
 Office On the wall at the back of the stage  
 hangs a large boldly-printed map showing  
 British Sudoland and Ostman Sudoland, col-  
 oured respectively pink and blue The fron-

tier between the two colonies is formed by a  
 chain of mountains one peak, prominently  
 marked F 6, is ringed with a red circle to  
 emphasize its importance

At a table covered with papers, maps and  
 books of reference are seated, from L to R  
 LORD STAGMANTLE, SIR JAMES RANSOM,  
 GENERAL DELLABY-COUCH and LADY ISABEL  
 WELWYN

As the curtain rises, JAMES lays down a  
 document from which he has been reading  
 aloud to the others

James That, briefly, is the position I  
 think you'll all agree with me that it is de-  
 plorable

Isabel But surely, surely the report ex-  
 aggerates? My poor darling Sudoland—it's  
 still like home to me, you know! No, I  
 simply can't believe it!

James We all appreciate your feelings,  
 Lady Isabel They are most natural Un-  
 fortunately I have reason to believe that  
 this report, so far from exaggerating, may  
 even underestimate the gravity of the situa-  
 tion From other sources—not official,  
 it is true, but as a rule absolutely reliable—  
 we hear that the whole southern province is  
 in a state of uproar Government stores  
 have been burnt, British officers have been  
 attacked In a few hill stations, the women  
 of the European settlements have been  
 grossly insulted—

Isabel The cowardly fiends! How they  
 can dare! In my father's time—

General In your father's time, Lady Isa-  
 bel, a British Governor was required to rule,  
 not to coddle a native population according  
 to the sentimental notions of a gang of  
 home-bred politicians The Sudoese hill-  
 man has not changed since your father's  
 day take him for what he is, he's a fine fel-  
 low He's a man and he expects to be ruled  
 by men He understands strength and he  
 respects it He despises weakness and he  
 takes advantage of it Show him the busi-  
 ness end of a machine-gun and he'll—

James [acidly] I think, General, you can  
 hardly complain that the Government of  
 which I am a member shows any lack of  
 respect for your great practical experience  
 in administration Otherwise you would  
 not have been invited to attend this confer-  
 ence today But I should like to suggest  
 that, in your wholesale condemnation of  
 politicians, you are apt to forget that we are  
 only the servants of the public Public



opinion has changed greatly, during the last twenty years, with regard to the native populations of the Empire. There have been unfortunate incidents which unscrupulous party agitators have not hesitated to misrepresent. To take your own case, that most regrettable *contretemps* at Bolo-Bolo.

*Isabel* Really, Sir James, is it necessary at a time like this, to stoop to personalities?

*James [smoothly]* My dear Lady Isabel, I'm sure I had no intention of hurting the General's feelings. General, please accept my apologies. I only wished to remind you—not, alas, that any of us need reminding—how grossly a valued public servant can be maligned in the performance of a painful duty by the venom of the popular press—

*Stagmantle [beginning to laugh wheezily]*  
*British General Butchers Unarmed Mob!*  
*Children Massacred In Mothers' Arms!*  
*Murder Stains The Jack!*

*James [hastily]* Yes, yes. The nauseating clichés of gutter socialism—

*Stagmantle* Socialism my foot! Why, that's out of the *Evening Moon*! Splashed it all over the frontpage—nearly doubled our sales, that week! No offence, General. We were out to smash the Labour Government, you know and, by God, we did! Your little stunt came in handy any stick's good enough to beat a dog with, you know! Ha, ha, ha!

*Isabel* Of all the utterly low and contemptible things I ever heard.

*James [hastily intervening]* As Lord Stagmantle quite rightly observes, the tactical problems raised by a great democratic electorate are exceedingly complex. One must try to see things in perspective. I'm sure nobody doubts Lord Stagmantle's loyalty in this present crisis. Had it not been for his assistance in presenting the events of the last month to the public in their true proportions—

*Stagmantle* Look here, Ransom, that's just what I came to tell you today. We can't keep this up for ever, you know. *The Thunderbolt* has been featuring the Sudoland revolts now for a week or more. How much longer do you expect us to play hush-hush? It's beginning to affect our circulation already. You've got to do something, quick.

*Isabel* But surely, Lord Stagmantle, all this suppression and misrepresentation of

facts is a very mistaken policy? Why can't you have more courage? Why not let the public judge for itself? I should have thought that the truth—

*Stagmantle* The truth, Lady Isabel, is that the natives of British Sudoland would like us to go to hell—pardon my language—and stay there. The truth is that we've got ten millions invested in the country and we don't intend to budge—not if we have to shoot every nigger from one end of the land to the other. The truth is that we're under-garrisoned and under-policed and that we're in a blue funk that the Ostnians will come over the frontier and drive us into the sea. Already, they've spent thousands on propaganda among our natives, promising reforms which neither they nor we nor any other colonial power could ever carry out. This revolt is the result. There's the truth for you and you want me to tell that to the public! What do you take me for—a bolshevik?

*James* Lord Stagmantle is perfectly right though, with his characteristic flair for essentials, he over-simplifies the situation, perhaps, a little. He asks me to do something. I shall not disappoint him. I did not call this meeting merely in order to alarm you. His Majesty's Government has a plan. [*He rises and points dramatically to the map on the wall, indicating F 6*] The key to the problem lies there!

*Isabel* Why, but that's the Haunted Mountain! I used to be able to see it from my bedroom window at the Residency, when the weather was clear. Let me think, now, what did the natives call it?

*James* The mountain has, I understand, many local names, most of them unpronounceable. The survey refers to it simply as F 6.

*Stagmantle* A haunted mountain, eh? What's the story in it?

*James* Merely that the mountain is said to be haunted by a guardian demon. For this reason, no native will set foot upon it. As you will notice, it stands exactly on the frontier line. Both Ostnia and ourselves claim it, but, up to the present, no European has ever visited the district at all.

*Isabel* I remember, when I was a little girl, being afraid that the demon would come and carry me away with him to the top! Aren't children absurd?

*General* May I ask if we come here this morning to discuss fairy-tales?

*James* A fairy-tale, General, is significant according to the number of people who believe in it. This one is credited by several millions of natives on both sides of the frontier.

Also, the legend has lately developed a sequel which may appeal more strongly to your imagination. The natives have begun telling each other that the white man who first reaches the summit of F 6, will be lord over both the Sudolands, with his descendants, for a thousand years.

*Stagmantle* Aha, so that's their little game! The Ostnians started this yarn, of course?

*James* You are very quick to follow me, Lord Stagmantle. And perfectly correct. Yes, the Ostnian agents have been propagating this story for the past six months. We've traced it right down into the plains.

*General* But, Ransom, you don't seriously suggest that the Ostnians expect to gain anything by spreading this absurd nonsense? The hillmen may believe them, I admit—the Sudoese are credulous beggars—but, hang it all, what good can it do Ostnia? None whatever. If you ask me, this is just another Ostnian bluff. Bluffing's their strong suit.

*James* I wish I could agree with you, General. But this morning this telegram reached us, through the Intelligence [Reads] "Expedition under Blavek left Ostma for Ostnian Sudoland yesterday great secrecy intending attempt ascent F 6"

*Isabel* Monstrous!

*General* The beggars are mad as coots!

*Stagmantle* Not so mad as you may think, General. I ought to know something about propaganda stunts: this is one of the best I ever struck. If the Ostnians get to the top of F 6, your natives are going to make big trouble. Whether you like it or not, you'll have to start shooting. And Ostnia will intervene, in the name of the poor oppressed subject races. They'll have world opinion on their side, into the bargain. You're in a cleft stick.

*Isabel* Can't we send a cruiser to stop this expedition?

*Stagmantle* Certainly. If you care to start a European war.

*General* At any rate, these chaps will never reach the summit.

*James* We can't be too sure of that, I'm afraid. There's a great deal at stake.

*Isabel* You sit here calmly and say so! Oh, if only I were a man! What are you going to do?

*James* His Majesty's Government proposes to send an expedition to Sudoland without delay.

*Isabel* Oh, good! Good!

*Stagmantle* Now you're talking!

*General* Never heard such damned tomfoolery in all my life!

*Stagmantle* I must congratulate you, Ransom. You're on to a big thing—a big thing for all of us! The *Evening Moon* will subscribe two thousand to the funds of the expedition.

*James* [shaking hands with him] I knew we could rely on your public spirit, Lord Stagmantle!

*Stagmantle* provided, of course, that we get the exclusive rights—pictures, film, lecture-tours, story. We can discuss details later.

*James* [rather taken aback] Er, yes, quite so, of course—

*Isabel* And now, there's not a moment to be lost! We must think quickly: who are you going to send? How will you find the right man to lead them?

*James* I am happy to say that I have found him already.

*Isabel* You've found him! Oh, Sir James, I think you're wonderful! Who is he?

*James* My brother.

*Isabel* You have a brother! And we never even knew!

*James* My brother Michael is considered, by competent experts, to be one of the best climbers in this country.

*Isabel* How I should adore to meet him—the man who can save Sudoland!

*James* We'll go to him at once. My car is waiting. [To GENERAL and STAGMANTLE] You'll come with us, I hope?

*General* I refuse to be a party to this wild goose chase. When you have ceased to occupy yourselves with demons and need some serious advice, you will find me at my club. Good morning.

*Isabel* Oh, General!

[The GENERAL, taking no notice, goes out]

*Stagmantle* Never mind him, Lady Isabel. A remarkable old gentleman, but

conservative no vision He'll come round to the idea in time [*Rubbing his hands gleefully*] Well, Ransom, let's see this brother of yours! I'll write the interview myself! By George, what a day for the *Evening Moon*!

Isabel [*reprovingly*] What a day for *England*, Lord Stagmantle!

Stagmantle Oh, England—yes, quite so, of course [*Looking up at map*] The Ascent of F 6!

[*All three of them stand regarding the map in reverent silence as the curtain falls*]

*The Stage-boxes, left and right, are illuminated In the right Box, Mr A sits listening to the radio ANNOUNCER, who speaks from the Box on the left*

Announcer If you drink coffee for breakfast, you will be familiar with Sudoland as the name of one of the most delicious brands in the world, said by connoisseurs to be equal even to Blue Mountain and only half the price But, unless you have a brother or a nephew there, I don't expect you know much more about this beautiful and exciting country It is about as big as Ireland and embraces a wide variety of scenery and climate, from the moist hot river-plains in the north to the magnificent escarpment of mountains on the southern border The natives are delightful people, of wonderful physique and very humorous and artistic Their villages consist of mud huts and they live very simply, chiefly on boiled bamboo shoots, which they call Kha Most of them are employed on the coffee estates, where they make excellent workmen You may have read recently, in some of the papers, of riots in Sudoland, but from personal experience I can tell you that these stories have been grossly exaggerated They were confined to a very small section of irresponsibles egged on by foreign agitators Hospitals, clinics and schools have done much to raise the standard of personal hygiene and education among the Sudese and the vast majority are happy and contented

[*At this point, Mrs A enters the Stage-box, right, bringing coffee*]

If ever I make enough money to retire from journalism, it is to a small hill station in Sudoland called Fort George that I should like to go, to spend the evening of my days I have knocked about the world

a good deal and seen most of the famous views, but never have I seen anything to compare with the one you get from the English Cemetery there From this point you see the whole mountain range which culminates in that terrifying fang of rock and ice called so prosaically on our maps "F 6," but in the native tongue "Chormopuloda"—that is, the Haunted Mountain There are many legends about this mountain and the troll who lives on the summit and devours all human beings who dare approach it No Europeans have, so far, ventured into this region, which is barren to a degree and inhabited only by monks who resent foreigners These monks practise a mysterious cult which is believed to be descended from the religion of ancient Egypt, and there are wonderful tales current of their mystical and psychic powers Be that as it may, I do not think it likely that it will be long before our young climbers will discover a new ground for their sport, offering more magnificent opportunities for their skill and their love of nature, than even those afforded by the Alps or the Himalayas . . .

[*Exit*]

Mrs A It's all very well for him, he can travel

Mr A Cousin Bertie's boy was there, Poor lad, he had to come home last year They've reduced the staff on his coffee estate

He said that the people and country were great

Mrs A Why do you never take me abroad?

Mr A Darling, you know that we can't afford . . .

Mrs A Afford! It's always the same excuse—

Money, money!

Mr A Dear, what's the use Of talking like this?

Mrs A You don't really care, If you did, we shouldn't be here Why don't you do something, something that pays,

Not be a clerk to the end of your days?

A dreary little clerk on a dreary little screw—

Can't you find something proper to do? But you don't care, it's the same to you Whether I live or whether I die I wish I were dead!

Mr A Mary, don't cry!  
You never know, perhaps one day  
Better luck will come our way  
It might be tomorrow You wait and see  
But, whenever it happens, we'll go on the spree!

From the first-class gilt saloon of channel-steamer we shall peer,  
While the cliffs of Dover vanish and the Calais flats appear,  
Land there, take the fastest train, have dinner in the dining-car,  
Through the evening rush to Paris, where the ladies' dresses are  
Nothing your most daring whisper prayed for in the night alone—

Evening frocks and shoes and jewels, you shall have them for your own  
Rome and Munich for the opera, Murren for the winter sports,  
See the relics of crusaders in the grey Dalmatian ports,  
Climb the pyramids in Egypt, walk in Versailles' ordered parks,  
Sail in gondolas at Venice, feed the pigeons at St Mark's

Mrs A O, what's the use of your pretending?

As if life had a chance of mending!  
There will be nothing to remember  
But the fortnight in August or early September,

The boarding-house food, the boarding-house faces,

The rain-spoilt picnics in the windswept places,

The camera lost and the suspicion,  
The failure in the putting-competition,

The silly performance on the pier—  
And it's going to happen again next year!

Mr A Mary!

Mrs A Don't touch me! Go away! Do you hear?

[She bursts into tears, he shrugs his shoulders and goes out, slamming the door The Box is darkened]

### SCENE THREE

Parlour of a public house in the Lake District Shabby late Victorian furniture A window at the back gives a view towards the fells By the door, L, is a telephone On the right, a cottage piano After supper At a large table, in the centre of the stage, MICHAEL RANSOM and the Doctor are play-

ing chess At a smaller table, L, LAMP is bending over a microscope In an armchair, R, SHAWCROSS is writing in a notebook GUNN is at the piano, strumming and singing As he writes, SHAWCROSS frowns with suppressed annoyance

Gunn [singing] The chimney sweepers  
Wash their faces and forget to wash the neck,

The lighthouse keepers

Let the lamps go out and leave the ships to wreck,

The prosperous baker

Leaves the rolls in hundreds in the oven to burn,

The undertaker

Pins a small note on the coffin saying  
"Wait till I return,

I've got a date with Love!"

And deep-sea divers

Cut their boots off and come bubbling to the top,

And engine-drivers

Bring expresses in the tunnel to a stop,

The village rector

Dashes down the side-aisle half-way through a psalm,

The sanitary inspector

Runs off with the cover of the cesspool on his arm—

To keep his date with Love!

[Jumps up from the piano and goes over to SHAWCROSS]

Still sweating at that old diary?

Shawcross I was doing my best to, in spite of your filthy row

Gunn So glad you enjoyed it, dearie I'll play you something else

[Goes back to piano]

Ransom Shut up, David [To Doctor] Check

Gunn [leaving piano and looking over SHAWCROSS' shoulder] Hullo, what's all this?

[Reads] " . followed up a splendid short pitch to the north summit Gunn, as usual "

Shawcross [snatching book] Leave that alone, damn you!

Gunn [grabs book back and reading]

" Gunn, as usual, fooling about, completely irresponsible I can never understand M F's patience with him . . . "

[SHAWCROSS tries to snatch book GUNN dodges round the chair]

Shawcross Give it here, blast your eyes!

*Gunn* Ha, ha! Wouldn't you like it! Why can't you be patient with me, like M F?

*Shawcross* You little fool! Do you want me to hurt you?

*Ransom* Give it back, David [To Doctor] Check

*Gunn* Sorry, Ian You're not cross with me, are you? Come and have a drink?

*Shawcross* Surely you ought to know by this time that I never drink the day before a climb

*Gunn* To hear you talk, one'd think we were a lot of monks.

*Shawcross* It just happens that I take climbing seriously You don't

*Gunn* All right Keep your hair on No offence [Strolls over to LAMP] Let's have a squint, Teddy [Looks into microscope] What's this stuff that looks like mouldy cheese?

*Lamp* If I were to tell you, you wouldn't be any the wiser

*Gunn* No, I expect I shouldn't

[He wanders over to watch the chess players]

*Shawcross* M F, may I take your climbing boots? I'd like to oil them for you

*Ransom* It's very kind of you, Ian, but I gave them to the maid

*Shawcross* I wish you wouldn't, M F How can you expect a girl to oil boots? I'll just do them over again, myself

*Ransom* [smiling] You spoil me, Ian One day, you'll regret it I shall become as helpless as a baby without its nurse

*Shawcross* [blushing] It's no trouble at all I like to keep things decent

*Gunn* [yawning and stretching himself] Gosh, I'm bored! If I had a thousand pounds, I'd buy an aeroplane and try to fly across the Atlantic if I had five hundred pounds, I'd go to Africa and shoot lions As it is, I've got seven and eleven-pence, so I suppose I'd better get drunk

[As he moves towards the door, the telephone rings]

*Shawcross* I expect that'll be the man about the new ropes [Goes to telephone]

Hullo . . . No, it's a call from London [To GUNN] For you

*Gunn* Ask who it is Wait a minute

Don't, for Heaven's sake, say I'm here!

*Ransom* [to Doctor] Look out for that castle, Tom

*Shawcross* Who's speaking? [To GUNN] It's a lady A Mrs da Silva

*Gunn* Gosh, that's torn it! Tell her I've gone away! Tell her I'm dead!

*Shawcross* [listening] She says she knows you're here and that it's no good saying you aren't [Holding out receiver to GUNN] Here, take it! I'm not going to do your dirty work for you

*Gunn* [after making frantic signals, advances gingerly to the telephone] Oh, hullo, darling—how lovely to hear your voice! No, of course not! How could you think so! Well, you know, I'm terribly busy just now I could get up to town this week-end, if it's really absolutely necessary

No, darling, I swear there isn't! Listen, here comes a kiss! Good-bye! [Hanging up receiver and mopping his forehead] And now she's on the track again! Says her husband's going to divorce her! Oh, whatever shall I do?

*Shawcross* I hardly see what else you can expect, when you've got about as much self-control as a tom-cat What we do object to is the way you involve us all in your nasty little intrigues

*Gunn* Everybody seems to be finding out my address This morning, I had five more bills Oh, if only I could get right out of England for six months, they might forget about me

*Ransom* Check

*Doctor* [making a move] Aha, M F, that's got you! No, it hasn't . Oh, dear!

*Ransom* Mate Thank you, Tom

*Doctor* Why do I always do something silly when I play with you? It's no good You get me every time. [Rising] Oh, I'm so fat, I'm so fat!

*Gunn* Doc, I believe you forgot your exercises this morning!

*Doctor* As if I ever forgot them! As if I ever could forget them! [Sighs] Perhaps it would be better if I stopped them altogether But I haven't the nerve

*Gunn* Poor old Doc! Come and have a drink Whisky shrivels up your flesh

*Doctor* Do you really think so? I've got to a stage where I can believe almost anything

[A knock at the door]

*Isabel's Voice* May we come in?

*Gunn* Another woman! Don't open it,

for the Lord's sake! Let me hide! [*Dives under the larger table*]

[*SHAWCROSS opens the door Enter LADY ISABEL, followed by STAGMANTLE and SIR JAMES RANSOM*]

Isabel [*to JAMES*] I told you they'd be in here!

Ransom [*unpleasantly surprised*] James!

James Ah, Michael, there you are! Very glad to find you at home I thought I'd pay you a surprise visit I've brought some friends who were anxious to meet you

May I introduce my brother—Lady Isabel Welwyn, Lord Stagmantle

Ransom [*with a rather stiff bow*] How do you do? These are my friends—Doctor Williams, Mr Shawcross, Mr Lamp David, come out [*GUNN scrambles out from under the table*] Mr Gunn

Gunn [*politely*] How do you do?

James [*to RANSOM*] I've been telling Lady Isabel and Lord Stagmantle about your climbing exploits They were greatly interested

Isabel You know, Mr Ransom, you're not a bit like Sir James! I should never have taken you for brothers, at all!

Stagmantle It's a great pleasure to meet you, Mr Ransom I'm always glad to make contacts with prominent personalities, in any walk of life Sir James tells me that you have many sidelines You're a scholar, I believe? Well, now, that intrigues me Scholar and man of action an unusual mixture, eh?

James As I never fail to observe, my brother has all the brains of our family In all humility I say it—my brother is a great man

Ransom [*who has listened to the above remarks with growing uneasiness, now turns on JAMES and blurts out*] Why have you come here? What do you want?

James [*smiling awkwardly*] Hardly very friendly, are you, Michael? How do you know that I want anything—beyond the pleasure of seeing you again after so long?

Ransom How often, when we were boys, you used to come to me as you come today, with that peculiar smile on your face, half impudent, half timid! What do you want this time—my toy engine, my cricket bat, my rare West Indian stamps? Or shall I do you a favour—run that errand to the butcher's, correct your Latin verses, clean

the motor-bicycle? Let's hear what it is, James we're grown men now

James [*with a change of manner*] You are quite right, Michael I shall not waste words There is no time to lose [*Lowering his voice*] Isn't it possible for me to speak to you alone?

Ransom If you have no secrets from your friends, I have none from mine

James Very well, since you wish it [*Clearing his throat*] In the name of His Majesty's Government, I have come to make you a most important proposition—

Ransom Which I unconditionally refuse

James [*taken aback*] But—Michael—I haven't even told you what it is!

Ransom You have told me quite enough I know your propositions, James they are all alike They are exceedingly convincing They contain certain reservations They are concerned with prestige, tactics, money and the privately pre-arranged meanings of familiar words I will have nothing to do with any of them Keep to your world I will keep to mine

James You are not being fair to me, Michael You have never been fair to me What I am offering you is an opportunity—the greatest of your whole life—to do something after your own heart We want you to lead an expedition which will attempt the ascent of F 6

Ransom [*startled*] F 6! What have you and your world to do with F 6?

James Ah, you see, Michael, I told you you would be interested!

Ransom Since boyhood, in dreams, I have seen the huge north face On nights when I could not sleep I worked up those couloirs, crawled along the eastern arête, planning every movement, foreseeing every hold Through how many thousand years have those virgin buttresses been awaiting me! F 6 is my fate But not now Not like this! No, no, no! I refuse!

James But, Michael, this is sheer caprice! I must explain the future of England, of the Empire, may be at stake Weighty political considerations, the Government—

Ransom And your own career? Be honest, James, and add the heaviest weight to the scales No, I am sorry, but F 6 is more important to me even than that I will not go

Isabel Mr Ransom, if you lead this ex-

pedition—no matter whether you succeed or fail and of course you *will* succeed—there is not a woman in England who will not feel proud of you—*more* than proud! I appeal to you, as an Englishwoman, in the name of all Englishwomen You refused your brother Can you refuse me?

*Ransom.* I can refuse you, Lady Isabel

*Isabel* You disappoint me, Mr Ransom Sir James made me hope great things of you He was too generous I had never expected this I see it in your eyes You are afraid

*Ransom* I am afraid of a great many things, Lady Isabel But of nothing which you in your worst nightmares could ever imagine, and of that word least of all

*Stagmantle* Look here, Ransom, let's understand each other I'm not going to talk a lot of blarney to you about England and Idealism I'm a practical man You're a practical man—of course you are! Only failures are idealists My dear fellow, think what this climb will mean to you! Cash, and lots of it! You need cash to pursue your hobby? Of course you do! Look at it in a sensible light [*Lowers his voice*] Between ourselves, this expedition's nothing more or less than a political racket You know that So do I Well, who cares! Leave the dirty work to your brother and me we're used to it Forget about us Go out to F 6 and enjoy yourself Make climbing history By God, I envy you! If I were twenty years younger, I swear I'd ask you to take me along!

*Ransom* I like your reasons best, Lord Stagmantle And I respect you You talk like a man I'd rather have you in front of me on a rope than behind me with a loud-speaker I am sorry I know you won't understand my refusal But I do refuse

*Stagmantle* Is that your last word?

*Ransom* It is

[*There is a knock at the door*]

*Stagmantle* Too bad Well, Ransom, it seems we shall have to look elsewhere

*James* [*triumphantly*] Not yet! [*He goes to the door, opens it and speaks to someone outside*] Ah, splendid! So you got my telegram? Yes, he's here!

[*Enter MRS RANSOM*]

Here is somebody who may be able to persuade you, Michael!

*Ransom* [*with a cry of dismay*] Mother! Mother [*advancing to RANSOM*] Michael, I am so proud—

*Ransom* [*recoiling*] You too! No, it is impossible!

You come so late, it is an accident

Your shadow adds to theirs, a trick of the light

If this was purposed—

[*In the course of the following dialogue, the light becomes entirely concentrated upon RANSOM and his MOTHER The rest of the stage is darkened the other figures being seen only as indistinct shapes in the background*]

*Mother* I have no purpose but to see you happy,

And do you find that so remarkable?

What mother could deny it and be honest?

I know my son the greatest climber in the world,

I know F 6 the greatest mountain in the world

May not a mother come at once to bring Her only gift, her love? When the news came,

I was in bed, for lately

I've not been very well But what's a headache

When I can stand beside my son and see him

In the hour of his triumph?

*Ransom* If I have triumphed

It is not as you think I have refused it

*Mother* Refused it? Why? But no—

I must not question

My grown-up son You have your reasons, and I

Shall try to trust them always

James, I remember—

*Ransom* James! Was there no other name you could remember,

No niece or cousin? Ever since we were born

I have heard the note of preference in your voice

And must I hear it now? When we could barely walk,

I watched him romping through the children's party,

When we were boys at school,

I saw him charm his way to every heart

And idly win the prizes

That would not matter, we are older now

And I have found myself But James who has



The gaping world to ogle with his speeches  
Must fill the last gap in his great collection  
And pot-hunt for his brother Years ago  
He stole my share of you, and must he now  
Estrange me even from myself?

*Mother*                                  Michael,  
There is a secret I have kept so long  
My tongue is rusty    What you have said  
I knew and I have always known    Why do  
you start?

You are my Michael and I know my own  
A mother has no heaven but to look  
That was your secret, there is also mine  
From the good day when both of you were  
born.

And I first held you both in my two arms,  
James, bigger, prettier, the doctor's pride,  
Responding promptly to the nurse's cluck,  
And you, the tiny, serious and reserved,  
I knew your natures You never knew your  
father

But I can never see James toss his head  
Or laugh, or take a lady's arm, but I  
Must see your father in his popular pulpit  
Everyone thought your father wonderful  
And so did I, until I married him  
And knew him for a shell James is like  
him

He cannot live an hour without applause  
No one can say that I have stinted it  
But you, you were to be the truly strong  
Who must be kept from all that could infect  
Or weaken, it was for you I steeled my love  
Deliberately and hid it Do you think that  
it was easy

To shut you out? I who yearned to make  
My heart the cosiest nook in all the world  
And warm you there for ever, so to leave  
you

Stark to the indifferent blizzard and the lightning?

How many nights have I not bit my pillow  
As the temptation fought to pick you out  
of bed

And cover you with kisses? But I won  
You were to be unlike your father and your  
brother

You were to have the power to stand alone,  
And to withhold from loving must be all my  
love

I won, I said—but was the victory real?  
There was a mother crucified herself  
To save her favourite son from weakness,  
Unlike his twin, his brother who depended  
Upon the constant praises of the little

She saved him nothing he must have them  
too

Because his brother had them She had  
died

To make him free, but when the moment  
came

To choose the greatest action of his life  
He could not do it, for his brother asked  
him

And he was padlocked to a brother's hatred—

Ransom Mother, stop!

*Mother*            Michael! You mean——?

Ransom Yes Go to James and tell him that you won And may it give him pleasure

*Mother*    My boy!

[She attempts to embrace him He turns away]

**BLACK OUT**

*Music* The darkness is filled with VOICES  
OF NEWSBOYS, screaming like cats

**Evening Special! Evening Special!**

Ransom to lead Expedition!

## Famous Climber's Decision!

**Evening Moon Late Night Final!**

Young English Climber's Daredevil At-  
tempt!

**The Haunted Mountain Full Story and Pictures!**

Monasteries in Sudoland    Amazing Revelations!

[The Stage-box on the right is illuminated Mrs A is reading a morning paper]

Mrs A I read the papers, there is nothing there

But news of failure and despair  
The savage train-wreck in the dead of night,  
The fire in the school, the children caught  
alight,

The starving actor in the oven lying,  
The cashier shot in the grab-raid and left  
dying.

The young girl slain upon the surgeon's table,

The poison-bottle with the harmless label,  
The workman fallen in the scalding vat,  
The father's strained heart stopping as he  
sat.

The student driven crazy by his reading,  
The roadside accident hopelessly bleeding  
The bankrupt quaking at the postman's  
knock,



The moaning murderer baited in the dock—

[Enter Mr A with evening paper]

Mr A Look, Mary! Read this!

[As they read, VOICES are heard from the darkness of the stage]

Voices Michael Forsyth Ransom

Eight stone six Aged twenty-eight years

Short and blue-eyed

His first experiences the rectory elms and the garden quarry

Kept a tame rook Was privately educated, By a Hungarian tutor

Climbed the west buttress of Clogwyn Du'r Arddu

While still in his teens The late Colonel Bow said

"That boy will go far"

Visited Switzerland, in a single season

Made a new traverse on the Grandes Jorasses,

Did the Furggen Shoulder and the Green Needle of Chamonix

Studied physiology in Vienna under Niedermeyer

Went to the Julian Alps,

Conquered Triglav, mastered the Scarlet Crag

Disappeared into Asia Minor, appeared in the Caucasus

On two-headed Ushba, returned to England, In an old windmill near the mouth of the Nen

Translated Confucius during a summer

Is unmarried Hates dogs Plays the viola da gamba

Is said to be an authority on Goya

Drinks and eats little but is fond of crystallized apricots

[The Stage-box on the left is illuminated LORD STAGMANTLE is seen at the microphone]

Stagmantle It goes without saying that the other members of the Expedition are the finest flower of English Mountaineering, and, in hands as capable and brilliant as these, the honour and prestige of Britain, may, I am sure, be safely left In this machine-ridden age, some people are tempted to suppose that Adventure is dead, but the spirit of Man has never refused to respond to the challenge of the unknown and men will always be found ready to take up the gauntlet, mindless of worldly profit, undaunted by hardship and risk, unheeding the dull spirit which can only sneer Cui

bono? From such pioneers, the man in the street may learn to play his part in the great game of life, small though it may be, with a keener zest and daring— [Exit]

[Meanwhile, the A's have been cutting photographs and articles out of the paper and pinning them to the walls of the box]

Mr A Cut out the photos and pin them to the wall,

Cut out the map and follow the details of it all,

Follow the progress of this mountain mission,

Day by day let it inspire our lowly condition

Mrs A Many have come to us often with their conscious charms,

They stood upon platforms and madly waved their arms,

At the top of their voices they promised all we lack,

They offered us glory but they wanted it back

Mr A But these are prepared to risk their lives in action

In which the peril is their only satisfaction They have not asked us to alter our lives Or to eat less meat or to be more kind to our wives

[LADY ISABEL appears at the microphone in the Stage-box, L]

Isabel The Englishman is reserved He does not wear his heart on his sleeve nor put his best goods in his shop-window He smokes his pipe and answers in words of one syllable So that those who do not know him think that he is stupid and cold But every now and then, now in this part of the world, now in that, something generous, something brave or beautiful, just happens And when we start to investigate it we shall generally find that, at the bottom of it all, is an Englishman I have had the privilege of meeting Mr Ransom and his companions on this expedition personally, and I can say with absolute sincerity that never in my life have I come away feeling so exalted, so proud that I belonged to the same country and the same race as these gallant men

[Exit]

Mrs A They make no promise to improve our station, At our weakness they make no show of indignation,

They do not offer contemptuously to lend a hand

But their courage is something the least can understand

*Mr A* The corner tobacconist and the booking-clerk,

The naked miner hewing in the dark,  
The forge-hand sweating at the huge steam-hammer,

The girl imprisoned in the tower of a stammer—

*Mrs A* The invalid, sheep-counting all the night,

The small, the tall, the black-haired and the white

See something each can estimate,

They can read of these actions and know them great

*[GUNN appears at the microphone in the Stage-box, left]*

*Gunn* I don't really know exactly what to say We none of us know what F 6 is going to be like If you ask me, I think she's probably an ugly old maid I'm scared stiff, but Ransom will hold our hands, I expect We shall be a jolly party, at least, I hope so I've been on one or two of these expeditions and no one's murdered me yet They say that there's a ghost at the top, but I've made Doctor Williams promise that if we see anything he'll let me hide behind him Well, I don't think I've got anything else to say, so I'll tell you a limerick I've just made up

There was an old man of F 6

Who had some extraordinary tricks

He took off—

*[An Announcer comes hastily into the Box, pushes GUNN aside and speaks into the microphone]*

*Announcer* We are all most grateful to Mr Gunn for his very interesting talk Listeners will no doubt join us in wishing the party every success There will now be a short interval in the programme

*[Exit both Stage-box, left, is darkened]*

*Mrs A* John, I'm so happy! Can't we do something to celebrate?

*Mr A* Let's go away for the week-end Let's go now!

*Mrs A* But it's seven o'clock and supper's nearly ready!

*Mr A* O, bother the supper! Let it burn!

*Mrs A* Let's go away and never return; Catch the last train to—

*Mr A* Where to?

*Mrs A* What does it matter?

Anywhere out of this rush and this clatter!  
Get your toothbrush, get your pyjamas,  
Fetch your razor and let us be gone,  
Hurry and pack, may we never come back,  
For Youth goes quickly and Age comes on!

*[They begin to put on their outdoor clothes, pack, etc]*

*Mr A* Dover would like us, Margate would welcome

Hastings and Folkestone would give us a part,

Hove be excited and Brighton delighted,  
Southend would take us warm to her heart

*Both* Moments of happiness do not come often,

Opportunity's easy to miss

O, let us seize them, of all their joy squeeze them,

For Monday returns when none may kiss!

*[Exeunt]*

## ACT TWO

### SCENE ONE

*F 6 Room in a monastery on the Great Glacier A high, gloomy, vaulted chamber, with doors L into the courtyard, R into the interior of the building In the back wall, arches open into a cloister, beyond which the greenish, faintly glowing ice of the glacier is visible*

*MICHAEL RANSOM and SHAWCROSS are seated at a table in the foreground, on which stand three silver candlesticks with church candles of coloured wax Ransom and SHAWCROSS both have notebooks and pencils, they are checking stores*

*Ransom* How many tins of malted milk?

*Shawcross* Fifty

*Ransom* How are we off for dried fruit?

*Shawcross* Two boxes of figs, three of dates, five of apricots

*Ransom* We must remember to ask the monks about yak butter How about the petrol for the Primus?

*Shawcross* God, that reminds me! *[He jumps up and goes to the door, left Looking out into the courtyard]* The porters haven't finished unloading it yet! *[Shouting]* Hi! Sing ko, pan no ah! Teng fang! Naga! Naga! *[Returning to the table]*

Lazy devils! And it'll be dark in a few minutes That's what comes of leaving things to Gunn He treats this whole business like a picnic

[*He glances quickly at RANSOM, who does not, however, respond*]

Ransom Have we got enough soup cubes?

Shawcross Three large packets [*Hesitates*] Look here, M F, I've been wanting to talk to you about Gunn for a long time now You know, I hate to bother you with this sort of thing I've tried to keep you from noticing—

Ransom [*smiling*] I'm afraid you haven't succeeded very well

Shawcross [*eagerly*] You mean, you *did* see something? Well, in a way, I'm glad Because, if you hadn't, you mightn't believe me—

Ransom I saw that Gunn teased the yaks and scared the porters by jumping out from behind rocks, pretending to be a leopard I noticed the tricks he's played on Tom and on Teddy—and on you, too, Ian I agree that he's an intolerable nuisance and I think that without him this expedition would be much more businesslike and very gloomy indeed

Shawcross [*exasperated*] The thing I admire most about you, M F, is your wonderful broadmindedness It's an example to me I'm not very tolerant, I'm afraid If Gunn amuses you and the others, I'm glad I hope I can see a joke as well as anyone But that wasn't what I meant, just now This is something quite different I hardly like to tell you—

Ransom If you hadn't meant to tell me, Ian, you wouldn't have started this conversation at all

Shawcross [*blurring it out*] Well then—Gunn steals!

Ransom [*laughing*] Oh that!

Shawcross So you *did* know!

Ransom Of course He's always done it, ever since I've known him I'm surprised that you've only just noticed it He steals like a magpie bits of india-rubber, chiefly, but also pencils, watches, and occasionally money That reminds me, I expect he's got my camera I was imagining I'd lost it down in the gorge while we were fording the river

Shawcross But, M F, you can't tolerate

this kind of thing! What are you going to do?

Ransom Ask him if he's got it, of course He always returns things if you ask him straight out

Shawcross But surely there's more to it than that? How can you take a man with you who simply doesn't play the game? One has to have some standards of decency, I suppose

Ransom [*smiling*] You haven't changed much, have you, Ian, since you were head Prefect and Captain of the First Fifteen?

Shawcross [*bitterly*] You're always laughing at me I suppose you think I'm just a priggish fool?

Ransom I certainly don't think you're a fool You know perfectly well that I don't You know that I rely on your help, more than anybody's, to make this expedition a success You organize everything, look after everything, think of everything You are one of the bravest and most efficient people I have met in my whole life Do you want me to say any more?

Shawcross Thank you, M F . . . You make me feel ashamed As long as you trust me, then I don't give a damn what anybody else thinks or says You know I'd follow you anywhere We all would

The wonderful thing about a man like you is that you can use all kinds of people and get the best out of each I think I understand better, now, what it is that you get out of Gunn I don't want to run him down—just because his kind of humour's a bit too subtle for me [*With increasing bitterness*] He's not a bad sort in his way, he's all right to have about the place, I suppose, as long as there's no special difficulty or danger He's a damn good climber, too, I admit—only he simply hasn't got the temperament I'm wondering what he'll be like up there, on the north face You remember how he screamed, that day, in the Coolins, and wouldn't budge for an hour? It was pitiful

Ransom David's always frightened when he climbs Otherwise, he wouldn't climb Being frightened is his chief pleasure in life He's frightened when he drives a racing-car or seduces somebody's wife At present he prefers mountaineering because it frightens him most of all

Shawcross How well you understand him, M F! Now, that's just the point I

wanted to make wouldn't it be better, when we get to Camp B, to leave Gunn behind?

*Ransom [smiling]* To damage all the instruments and eat up all the stores?

*Shawcross* Well, but, I mean, he'll have to be dropped somewhere, won't he? [*A pause*] Do you really think it's wise to take him as far as Camp A?

*Ransom* I shall decide when the time comes

*Shawcross* I mean, of course, it's quite settled, isn't it, that only two of us shall try to reach the summit?

*Ransom* Yes There'll be only two of us

*Shawcross* And you can't for a moment, be thinking of taking Gunn? [*Pause*] My God, it'd be madness! M F—you couldn't!

*Ransom* Have I said I shall? I tell you, Ian, I have decided nothing yet We can't discuss this, now

*Shawcross [with growing excitement]* If I thought such a thing was possible—I'd—I don't know what I'd do! Gunn, that miserable little rotter! Why, he's not a climber at all! He's just a neurotic! He poses He does everything for effect Just a beastly little posing coward! [*RANSOM is silent*] Oh, I know you think I'm simply jealous!

[*Enter LAMP and the Doctor, left*]

*Lamp [excitedly]* The flora here is amazing, simply amazing! I've had one of the most wonderful afternoons of my life! I tell you what, Doctor— [*Seeing the others*] Oh, here you are, M F! Didn't see you in the dark

*Shawcross* Half a minute

[*Lights the candles*]

*Lamp* I was just telling the Doctor, I've had a field-day! Extraordinarily interesting! M F, I'm convinced that Hawkins is wrong when he denies the possibility of a five-leaved *Polus Naufrangia*! And what's more, I don't mind betting you I shall find one here, on F 6!

*Ransom* Lets see what you got this afternoon

*Lamp [opening his vasculum]* Here's *Stagnus Menengitis* and *Frustrax Abominum* Isn't it a beauty! And look here, here's something to surprise you you told me there wasn't a *Rossus Monstrens* with blue petals! Well, what do you say to this?

*Ransom [examining flower]* By Jove, that's interesting!

[*Enter GUNN, left*]

*Gunn* Ah, here you all are! Thank goodness! I've been hunting for you everywhere! I began to think something had happened to you

[*He sits down and mops his forehead*]

*Doctor* What's the matter with you, David? You look rattled

*Gunn* You'd be rattled if you'd been hanging around this place all the afternoon Ugh, it gives me the creeps!

*Doctor* Why, what's wrong with it?

*Gunn* It's those beastly monks Don't they make you feel damned queer, with those cowls over their faces? I've been watching them for hours, out there they never seem to speak or make any signs, they just stand facing each other, like this—and yet you have a nasty sort of feeling that they're talking, somehow I shouldn't wonder if they do it by telepathy or something

*Doctor* They seemed quite friendly and harmless when we arrived

*Gunn* Don't you believe it They're plotting to do us in while we're asleep, I bet you they are . This afternoon, when I was sitting watching the porters unload, I kept imagining there was somebody standing just behind me Several times, I turned round quickly to try to catch him, but there was nothing there And then I saw a monk and I thought I'd ask him which room we could use for the stores So I went over to him and made signs and he seemed to understand all right He turned round and went to one of the doors and opened it and went inside Naturally, I followed him But when I got into the room, there was nobody there And there wasn't even a window he could have got out of . No, I don't like this place!

*Doctor* I tell you what, David, you've had a touch of the sun I'll give you something to make you sleep well tonight

*Ransom* Oh, by the way, David, where's my camera? You've got it, haven't you?

*Gunn [with a charming smile]* Yes, it's in my room I thought I'd look after it for you for a bit

*Shawcross* Well, of all the blasted—

*Ransom [smiling]* That was very kind of you But I can look after it quite nicely

by myself Would you bring it here now, please?

Gunn Very well—if you'd rather—  
[As he moves towards the door, L, a low chanting begins from the courtyard outside This chant continues throughout the following scene The words are ]

Go Ga, morum tonga tara  
Mi no tang hum valka vara  
So so so kum mooni lara

Korkra ha Chormopuloda  
Antifora lampasoda  
Kang ku gar, bari baroda

Ming ting ishta sokloskya  
No rum ga ga no rum gaya  
Nong Chormopuloda sya

Gunn My God, what's that!  
[He retreats hastily behind RANSOM's chair]  
Shawcross [going to the door, L and looking out] They're all gathered out there in the courtyard Looks as if they're going to start a procession

[Closes door and comes back to the table The chanting gets louder]

Gunn Lock that door, for Heaven's sake! Suppose they come in here!

Shawcross Do you ever think of anything except your own beastly little skin?

[As the chanting increases, a procession of monks begins to pass along the cloister at the back of the stage Some are hooded so that their faces are invisible, others wear devil-masks They carry candles, jars, dishes containing relics and sacred objects In the middle of the procession comes a coffin supported by four bearers The procession crosses the stage, behind the arches, from L to R]

Gunn A coffin! Gosh, did you see?

Doctor Cheer up, David, there's only one! Perhaps they won't choose you

Lamp What do you make of it, M F?

Ransom These must be the rites for the propitiation of the spirits which guard the house of the dead

[By this time, the procession has passed and the chanting dies away]

Gunn Phew! I hope they don't do that again! This place is about as cheerful as Woking Cemetery! [He crosses stage to

the arches and looks out through them along the cloister, first to the R, then L] All gone now, thank goodness!

[As he speaks, the door on the R opens noiselessly and a cowed monk enters, carrying in his hands a crystal which glows faintly with a bluish light]

You chaps didn't really think I was scared, did you? Of course, I was only ragging It takes more than that to frighten me! [He turns and suddenly sees the monk Screams] Oh, God!

[As the monk advances towards the front of the stage, GUNN retreats backwards before him]

What does he want? Do something, somebody! M. F, you speak to him

Ransom Om no hum, no na num se?

[Monk is silent]

No num seng ka, ka no ah?

[Monk is silent]

King t'sang po, gang se gang?

[Monk is silent]

No good, I'm afraid I've tried him in all three dialects Perhaps he isn't allowed to answer

Doctor Funny kind of a lamp he's got there [Approaches]

Gunn. I say, do be careful! He may have a knife up his sleeve!

Doctor Extraordinary thing, it doesn't seem to be a lamp at all! It just shines [Bending over the crystal] Why, it's a kind of mirror—I can see myself in it! Am I really as fat as that? Gracious, I'm quite bald! Hullo, what's this? I'm sitting in an armchair I seem to know that room Yes, it's the Reform Club! I say, I think I must have got a touch of the sun, like David! Am I just seeing things? Here, Teddy, you come and look!

Lamp [looking] Polus Naufrangia! As plain as anything. all five leaves By Jove, what a beauty! [Rubbing his eyes] I must be going mad!

Gunn He's hypnotizing you, that's what it is! When we're all in a trance we shall probably be murdered I say, I must have a look [Goes to crystal]

Lamp [excitedly] I saw it as plain as that candle! Five distinct leaves!

Gunn [looking] Why, there's my old Alfa Romeo! And someone's sitting in it—it's a woman, dressed all in black! She seems to be at a cross-roads I see the signposts, but I can't read what's written on

it Now she's turning her head My God, it's Toni, Mrs da Silva! [Coming away] Do you think that means her husband's died and now she'll follow me out here? Come on, Ian your turn!

Shawcross [takes a pace towards the crystal, stops, bursts out violently] I'm not going to have anything to do with this damned business! You others please yourselves It isn't right We aren't meant to know these things It's probably some kind of trick, anyhow M F, I'm going to get the wireless ready It's nearly time to pick up the weather report from Fort George

[Takes up one of the candles and exits, L]

Gunn You'll have a look, won't you, M F?

Ransom [after a moment's hesitation] Very well

[Stares into crystal]

Doctor Well, what is it this time? Motors or flowers or London clubs?

Gunn Try and see something useful Ask it to tell you the best route up F 6

Ransom [after a long pause] I can see nothing

Gunn Nothing at all! Oh, M F!

Doctor That all goes to support the hypnotism theory M F was a bit too strong for him

[The monk turns silently and goes out by the door, R]

Gunn Ought we to have tipped him, or anything? Gosh, you know, that crystal has given me quite a headache! I can't understand your not seeing anything, M F Or was it so awful that you won't tell us?

Doctor I feel I could do with a change of air Let's go and see if Ian's got Fort George

Gunn Right you are Coming, M F?

Ransom No, I shall stay here The Abbot may wish to speak to me

[Gunn, Doctor and Lanier go out, L]

Bring back the crystal let me look again And prove the former vision a poor fake The small peccolating figure on the dais Above the swooning faces of the crowd And the torrential gestures of ascent— Was it myself? Was it for me the hand Far down the road distended their old cheeks?

The special engine barnacled with flowers The clashing salutations from the people? I thought so once but that was years ago

The child in the shadow of enormous elders, Oiling his bicycle, might have such dreams I cannot now I could not tell them that—

[Enter the ABBOT and two acolytes, R]

Abbot [making a sign of benediction]

Only God is great

Ransom [kneeling and kissing his hand]

But His power is for mercy

Abbot I hope everything has been arranged here to your satisfaction?

Ransom It is perfect

Abbot I am glad In these mountains, I fear we can offer but poor hospitality Please be seated, Mr Ransom [As they sit, he signs to the acolytes to withdraw] Now, tell me, you wish to start soon on your ascension of our mountain?

Ransom Tomorrow, if He permit it, Whose will must be done

Abbot You know the legend?

Ransom I have read the Book of the Dead

Abbot Such interest, Mr Ransom, is uncommon in one of your race In that case, you will have comprehended the meaning of the ceremony that was performed this evening out in the courtyard the office for the souls of the dead and the placation of the Demon I am afraid that you, with your western civilization, must consider us here excessively superstitious

No, you need not contradict me out of politeness I understand You see the painted mask and the horns and the eyes of fire and you think "This Demon is only a bogey that nurses use to frighten their children, I have outgrown such nonsense, it is fit only for ignorant monks and peasants With our factory chimneys and our furnaces and our locomotives we have banished these fairy-tales I shall climb the mountain and I shall see nothing" But you would be wrong

The peasants, as you surmise rightly, are simple and uneducated, so their vision is simple and uneducated They see the truth as a crude and coloured picture Perhaps, for that reason, they see it more clearly than you or I For it is a picture of truth The Demon is real Only his ministry and his visitation are unique for every nature To the complicated and sensitive like yourself Mr Ransom, his disguises are more subtle He is—what shall I say?—the formless terror in the dream, the stooping shadow

that withdraws itself as you wake in the half-dawn. You have heard his gnashing accusations in the high fever at a very great distance. You have felt his presence in the sinister contours of a valley or the sudden hostility of a copse or the choking apprehension that fills you unaccountably in the middle of the most intimate dinner-party. I did you an injustice just now when I said that you expected to see nothing on the mountain. You do expect to see something. That is why you are determined to climb it. You wish to confront the Demon face to face and conquer him. You wish to be perfect. But it is not possible for man in this life to reach perfection and I warn you: no man can see the Demon and live. I have read in your sacred books the story of Lucifer who wished to be God. Mr Ransom, beware of spiritual pride. It is not for us to put an end to the Demon and the desire to do so is, to brave and good men like yourself, the Demon's most powerful and insidious temptation. If there were no Demon, there would be no temptation. But the Demon is not the temptation. The temptation is always visible and may be fought. But the Demon is invisible and to challenge him to appear is death. I think that I understand your temptation, Mr Ransom. You would like to be great among men, to have power. Am I right?

*Ransom* So you know of my vision in the crystal—?

*Abbot* Ah, you saw it there, too? That is not strange. For all men see reflected there some fragment of their nature and glimpse a knowledge of those forces by whose free operation the future is forecast and limited. That is not supernatural. Nothing is revealed but what we have hidden from ourselves, the treasure we have buried and accursed. Your temptation, Mr Ransom, is written in your face. You know your powers and your intelligence. You could ask the world to follow you and it would serve you with blind obedience, for most men long to be delivered from the terror of thinking and feeling for themselves. And yours is the nature to which those are always attracted in whom the desire for devotion and self-immolation is strongest. And you would do them much good. But you know, as your great historian Lord Acton has put it, that "power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely,

all great men are bad." You recognise that. If you climb the mountain and confront the Demon, you think that the temptation will be no more, but if you succeed in climbing the mountain you will be a great national hero. The temptation will no longer be there—because you will have succumbed to it.

Mr Ransom, I have a proposal to make to you. There are two lives: the life of action and glory and the life of contemplation and knowledge, such as we live here. Action and glory cannot kill the Demon; they only stifle our fear of him for a moment. Knowledge and contemplation cannot kill him, either, but they can confine him to the desert recesses of the mountain. They can, in some measure, control him, so that he does not lay waste the meadows and terrify the simple inhabitants of the valleys. A community such as this is like a frontier outpost: it needs brave men. Mr Ransom, I offer you a place in our monastery. Do not answer at once, but think it over. I must leave you now. You can give me your answer in the morning. Good-night, Mr Ransom.

[*RANSOM bows deeply. Exit ABBOT, R.*]

*Ransom* Is it too late? Pretence? It is too late for that,

I recognise my purpose

There was a moment in the Lakeland inn,  
There was a choice then and I made it  
wrong,

And if I choose now, I must choose  
alone—

Not for my friends I cannot turn them  
back

O you, who are the history and the creator  
Of all those forms in which we are  
condemned to suffer,

To whom the intelligent and necessary is  
also the just,

Show me my path, show all of us, that each  
upon

This mortal star may feel himself the  
danger

That under his hand is softly palpitating  
Quieten that hand, interpret fully the  
commands

Of the four centres and the four conflicting  
winds

Those torn between the charities O reconcile

And to the human vision lead of one great  
meaning,



Linking the living and the dead, within the shadow

Of which uplifting, loving and constraining power

All other reasons do rejoice and operate

[Enter GUNN, L He looks cautiously round the room]

Gunn Has the old boy gone? Good I was afraid I might be butting in, but Ian and the others threw me out And I didn't much like the idea of sitting by myself in the dark, with all those monks around [Pause] Are you busy, M F? Would you rather I didn't talk?

Ransom No, David I'd like very much to talk. Had the wireless got started when you left?

Gunn Oh yes It's coming through beautifully But I only heard the weather report

Ransom How was it?

Gunn First-class We'll be able to start tomorrow, for a cert

Ransom You sound pleased

Gunn Of course I'm pleased! Who wouldn't be—after all these weeks of messing about? Tomorrow we shall be on the ice!

Ransom Now I come to think of it, I remember that I never even asked you if you wanted to join this expedition I asked all the others I suppose I took you for granted

Gunn I should hope you did! I should like to see anybody trying to get up F 6 and me not be there!

Ransom But supposing, at the same time, somebody else had asked you to climb another mountain, twice as high as F 6 and twice as difficult? Then you'd have gone with him, instead?

Gunn Of course not! Oh, well, perhaps—I don't know What's the matter with you tonight, M F? Why do you ask me that? If you think I'm not really keen, just because I fool about—

Ransom No, David I'm just asking you a simple question supposing I wasn't here—would you still be ready to go on?

Gunn Oh, well—now we'd got as far as this, I suppose we'd try to make a job of it But I know one thing damn well we certainly shouldn't get to the top

Ransom Why not?

Gunn Can you see us? There'd be mur-

der done before we reached Camp B even You know how I get on Ian's nerves!

Ransom You don't exactly try not to

Gunn Some of the time, I do And then I forget, or I just don't care I can't help it I'm like that, I suppose The funny thing is, I like old Ian If I didn't, I shouldn't rag him But he doesn't like me And if it wasn't for you there'd be trouble No, M F what this expedition would be like without you I simply can't imagine—

Ransom Listen, David There's something I must tell you, now—

[Enter SHAWCROSS, DOCTOR and LAMP, in great excitement, L]

Shawcross M F! A message has just come through. Blavek and his party are on the mountain already!

Gunn But it's impossible! When we last heard, he was still on the other side of the Tung Desert!

Shawcross I know, but this is official! He must have been making forced marches These fellows aren't mountaineers at all—they're soldiers! There's a whole regiment of them! Do you know, M F, what they're doing? They're hammering the whole south face full of pitons and hauling each other up like sacks! Good God, they'll be using fire-escapes before they've finished! Well, that settles it! We haven't a moment to lose

Ransom And you are all anxious to play their game the race to the summit? This won't be mountaineering It'll be a steeplechase Are you so sure the prize is worth it? Ian, you're the purist is this your idea of climbing? No time for observations, no time for reconnoitre Teddy, hadn't you better stay out of this? We can't wait a week, you know, while you look for your flowers

Lamp I'll take my chance of that later We've got to beat them!

Ransom And you, Tom?

Doctor You don't expect me to stay here, do you, M F? If you did, I believe I should disobey you This makes me feel twenty years younger already!

Ransom I suppose I needn't ask you two others?

Shawcross You needn't

Gunn I think this makes it all the more exciting! Good old Blavek!

Ransom Very well then you have



chosen for me I obey you We start at dawn

*[He rises to his feet with a slight gesture of weariness and resignation as the curtain falls]*

*The Stage-box on the right is illuminated  
The A's are having breakfast*

Mrs A Give me some money before you go

There are a number of bills we owe  
And you can go to the bank today  
During the lunch-hour

Mr A I dare say,  
But, as it happens, I'm overdrawn

Mrs A Overdrawn? What on earth have you done

With all the money? Where's it gone?

Mr A How does money always go?  
Papers, lunches, tube-fares, teas,  
Tooth-paste, stamps and doctor's fees,  
Our trip to Hove cost a bit, you know

Mrs A Can we never have fun? Can we never have any

And not have to count every single penny?  
Why can't you find a way to earn more?  
It's so degrading and dull to be poor  
Get another job.

Mr A. My job may be small  
But I'm damned lucky to have one at all  
When I think of those I knew in the War,  
All the fellows about my age

How many are earning a decent wage?  
There was O'Shea, the middle-weight champion,  
slouches from bar to bar now in  
a battered hat, cadging for drinks,

There was Morgan, famous for his stories,  
sells ladies' underwear from door to door,

There was Polewhele, with his university education,  
now Dan the Lavatory Man at  
a third-rate night-club,

And Holmes in our office, well past fifty,  
was dismissed last week to bring down expenses,

Next week another who shall it be?

It may be anyone It may be me

*[A newspaper is dropped through the door into the back of the Box Mr A goes to fetch it]*

Mrs A It's all this foreign competition  
Czechoslovakia, Russia, Japan,  
Ostnia and Westland do all they can  
To ruin our trade with their cheap goods,  
Dumping them on our market in floods

It makes my blood boil! You can find  
No British goods of any kind

In any of the big shops now  
The Government ought to stop it  
somehow—

Mr A Listen to this *[Reads]* Our  
Special Correspondent reports that the Ost-  
nian Expedition to F 6, headed by Blavek,  
has crossed the Tung Desert and is about to  
commence its final assault on the mountain  
Blavek is confident of success and, in moun-  
taineering circles, it is believed that the  
British climbers will have to make very  
strenuous efforts indeed if they are to beat  
their formidable opponents.

Mrs A You see? The foreigner every-  
where,

Competing in trade, competing in sport  
Competing in science and abstract thought  
And we just sit down and let them take  
The prizes! There's more than a mountain  
at stake

Mr A The travelogue showed us a Bab-  
ylon buried in sand

Mrs A And books have spoken of a  
Spain that was the brilliant centre of an  
Empire

Mr A I have found a spider in the opu-  
lent boardroom

Mrs A I have dreamed of a threadbare  
barnstorming actor, and he was a na-  
tional symbol

Mr A England's honour is covered with  
rust

Mrs A Ransom must beat them! He  
must! He must!

Mr A Or England falls She has had  
her hour

And now must decline to a second-class  
power

*[Puts on his bowler hat and exits, brandishing his newspaper The Stage-box is darkened]*

## SCENE TWO

*On F 6 At the foot of the West Buttress  
The back of the stage rises slightly, suggest-  
ing a precipice beyond A magnificent pan-  
orama of distant mountains On the right  
of the stage, the wall of the buttress rises,  
with an overhang*

MIDDAY RANSOM, SHAWCROSS and LAMP  
stand roped on the edge of the precipice, as-  
sisting the DOCTOR and GUNN, who are still  
out of sight, below The rope is belayed  
round a rock

Ransom [looking down] There's a hold to your left, Tom No, a little higher up Good Now you're all right

Gunn's Voice [from below] Look out, Doc! Don't tread on my face!

Ransom Now then

[After a moment, the DOCTOR hoists himself into view, panting]

Now you take it easy, Tom Fifteen minutes' rest, here

Lamp We've made good time, this morning

Ransom [looking down] You all right, David?

Gunn's Voice [from below] I think so

No! Ooh, er! Gosh, this rock is soft! Here we come!

[He appears]

Doctor Well, thank goodness, that coulour's behind us, anyhow Though how we shall ever get down it again is another matter

Ransom You were splendid, Tom Never known you in better form

Doctor I must have lost at least two stone That's one comfort

Gunn While we were in the chimney, I felt his sweat dripping on to me like a shower-bath I say, isn't there anything more to eat?

Ransom I'm afraid we must keep to our rations, David We're only carrying the minimum, you know

Shawcross I should have thought you'd eaten enough to satisfy even *your* appetite—considering you had all my chocolate, as well

Gunn Well, you needn't make a grievance out of it You didn't want it, did you?

Doctor Still feeling sick, Ian?

Shawcross [crossly] I'm all right

Doctor You don't look any too good

Shawcross Anyhow, I don't see that it helps much to keep fussing about trifles and thinking of one's comfort

[A pause]

Lamp Well, if we've got another ten minutes to spare, I think I'll be taking a look round Might spot a clump of Polus Naufrangia You never know It's about the right altitude, now

[He goes to the back of the stage and looks over, through his binoculars]

Gunn [following him] See anything? [Lamp shakes his head] Gosh, that's a drop!

[He balances on the edge and pretends to wobble] Ooh, er! Help!

Ransom Come away from there, David [GUNN obeys and begins wandering about the stage]

Doctor [pointing upwards] How high do you make that buttress?

Ransom About seventeen hundred feet We shall be on it all this afternoon We ought to reach the ridge easily by sunset

Gunn [poking about] Hullo, what's this? [Picks up a skull] Doctor Livingstone, I presume?

[The others, except LAMP, who continues to peer through his binoculars, collect around GUNN]

How on earth did he get here?

Doctor Goodness knows May have fallen from above See this crack? It's hardly likely to have been murder, up here

Shawcross Anyhow, he must have been a pretty useful climber to have got as far as he did I suppose there's no doubt it's a native skull?

Doctor Impossible to say It may have been some mad European who thought he'd have a shot at F 6 on his own, but that's scarcely possible Some herdsman, probably. What do you think, M F?

[Hands him the skull]

Lamp [shouting excitedly] Come here! Look!

Gunn What's the matter, Teddy?

Lamp Polus Naufrangia! Five-leaved! A beauty! Only just spotted it And it was right under my nose!

[He begins lowering himself over the edge]

Doctor Wait a moment, Teddy Better do that on the rope

Gunn [looking over] He'll be all right It's a broad ledge Only about twenty feet down

Doctor [looking over] Careful, Teddy Careful Take your time

Lamp's Voice [from below] I'm all right

[The others, except RANSOM, stand looking over the edge]

Ransom [to skull] Well, Master, the novices are here Have your dry bones no rustle of advice to give them? Or are you done with climbing? But that's improbable Imagination sees the ranges in the Country of the Dead, where those to whom a mountain is a mother find an eternal playground There Antoine de Ville scales pinnacles with

subtle engines, Gesner drinks water, shares his dreams with Saussure, whose passion for Mont Blanc became a kind of illness Pac-card is reconciled with Balmont, and Bourrit, the cathedral precentor, no longer falsifies their story Marie-Coutett still keeps his nickname of The Weasel, Donkin and Fox are talking of the Caucasus, Whympers goes climbing with his friends again and Hadow, who made the slip of inexperience, has no faults While, on the strictest but-tresses, the younger shadows look for fresher routes Tom Schmidt is there and the Ba-variant cyclists, and that pair also whom Odell saw on the step of Everest before the cloud hid them for ever, in the gigantic shadow of whose achievement we pitch our miserable tent—

*[The roar of an approaching avalanche is heard]*

Doctor An avalanche! My God!  
[RANSOM runs to join the others] Look out, Teddy! Look out!

Gunn Quick, man!

Shawcross Stay where you are!

Gunn Jump for it!

Doctor Oh, God! He's done for!

*[The roar of the avalanche drowns their voices, then gradually dies away]*

Shawcross He was just stooping to pick the flower, when the first stone got him

Doctor It was all over in a moment He was probably knocked right out

Shawcross As he went over the edge, you could see the flower in his hand

Gunn Gosh, I feel beastly! *[Sits down on a rock]*

Shawcross He was a damn good man!

Doctor I'm glad he found the Naufra-gia, anyway We must tell them that in London Perhaps the five-leaved kind will be named after him He'd like that, I think

Shawcross I just can't believe it Five minutes ago, he was standing here

Doctor *[looking at LAMP'S rucksack, which is lying on a rock]* What do you think we ought to do with this? His people might like to have it

Shawcross We can't very well take it with us now I think we'd better bury it here We can pick it up on our way down

Doctor Right you are I'll help you

*[Begins collecting stones]*

*[SHAWCROSS picks up the rucksack]*

Gunn Poor old Teddy! *[To SHAW-*

*CROSS]* Half a minute! *[Feels in the pocket of the rucksack]* Oh, good!

*[Pulls out a piece of chocolate and begins eating it]*

Shawcross *[horrified]* My God! Haven't you any decency left in you at all?

Gunn *[with his mouth full]* Why, what's the matter now?

Shawcross Of all the filthy callousness!

Gunn But, honestly, I don't see anything wrong He doesn't want it now, does he?

Shawcross If that's the line you take, I suppose there's no more to be said Get some stones!

*[While the others are burying the rucksack, RANSOM stoops and picks up LAMP'S snow-glasses, which he has left lying on the rocks at the back of the stage]*

Ransom The first victim to my pride If I had never asked him, he would not have come The Abbot was perfectly right My minor place in history is with the aberrant group of Caesars the dullard murderers who hale the gentle from their beds of love and, with a quacking drum, escort them to the drowning ditch and the death in the desert *[To the others]* You have forgotten these *[Gives glasses]* Hurry up We must be getting on Ian, will you change places with David?

*[Music They rope up in silence. RANSOM begins the traverse round the buttress, as the curtain slowly falls]*

*[Music They rope up in silence. RANSOM begins the traverse round the buttress, as the curtain slowly falls]*

*Both Stage-boxes are illuminated In the left-hand box, STAGMANTLE is at the microphone In the right-hand box, the A's sit, listening Mr A is playing Patience Mrs A is darning socks*

Stagmantle It is with the deepest regret that we have to announce the death of Mr Edward Lamp, a member of the F 6 Expedition He was climbing along a ridge on the north face after a rare botanical specimen when he was caught by an avalanche and killed He was twenty-four years of age

In Edward Lamp, Science has lost one of her most brilliant recruits At Cambridge he carried everything before him, and his career, so tragically cut short, promised to be of the highest distinction He died as he had lived in the service of his

austere mistress This is as he would have wished, and no man can do more Nor could one design him a more fitting grave than among the alpine flowers he loved so passionately and with such understanding [Exit]

Mrs A [moved] Death like his is right and splendid,

That is how life should be ended!

He cannot calculate nor dread

The mortifying in the bed,

Powers wasting day by day

While the courage ebbs away

Ever-charming, he will miss

The insulting paralysis,

Ruined intellect's confusion,

Ulcer's patient persecution,

Sciatica's intolerance

And the cancer's sly advance,

Never hear, among the dead,

The rival's brilliant paper read,

Colleague's deprecating cough

And the praises falling off,

Never know how in the best

Passion loses interest,

Beauty sliding from the bone

Leaves the rigid skeleton

Mr A If you had seen a dead man, you would not

Think it so beautiful to lie and rot,

I've watched men writhing on the dug-out floor

Cursing the land for which they went to war,

The joker cut off halfway through his story,

The coward blown involuntary to glory,

The steel butt smashing at the eyes that beg,

The stupid clutching at the shattered leg,

The twitching scarecrows on the rusty wire,

I've smelt Adonis stinking in the mire,

The puddle stolid round his golden curls,

Far from his precious mater and the girls,

I've heard the gas-case gargle, green as grass,

And, in the guns, Death's lasting animus

Do you think it would comfort Lamp to know

The British Public mourns him so?

I tell you, he'd give his rarest flower

Merely to breathe for one more hour!

What is this expedition? He has died

To satisfy our smug suburban pride

[The Stage-boxes are darkened]

## SCENE THREE

On F 6 Camp A The left of stage is occupied by a tent, which is open at the end facing the audience Behind it, to the right, the ground rises to a platform of rock, overhanging a precipice It is early evening during the dialogue which follows, the stage slowly darkens. Wind noises

RANSOM and the DOCTOR are inside the tent, preparing a meal The DOCTOR is cooking on the Primus stove

Doctor The wind's getting up again It's going to be a bad night I wish those two would turn up

Ransom We can't expect them just yet They're loaded, remember, and the going isn't easy

Doctor What was the psychrometer reading?

Ransom 65

Doctor We're in for a lot more snow

Ransom It looks like it

Doctor And if it's bad down here, what's it going to be like up there on the arête?

Ransom [smiling] Worse

Doctor M F—you can't start tomorrow!

Ransom I must

Doctor If you try it in this weather, you haven't a chance!

Ransom We shall have a better chance tomorrow than the day after Three days from now, there'd be none at all We can't hang on here for more than four days we haven't the stores

Doctor To try the arête in a blizzard is sheer madness!

Ransom Hasn't this whole climb been madness, Tom? We've done things in the last week which ought to have been planned and prepared for months We've scrambled up here somehow, and now we must make a rush for it Whatever the weather is, I must leave for the summit tomorrow

Doctor Very well, M F You didn't bring me up here to argue with you I won't Just tell me what you want me to do

Ransom Today is Tuesday You'll wait for us here till Friday, at dawn If we aren't back by then, you'll descend at once to Camp B, rest there as long as necessary and then carry out the evacuation of the mountain, as we arranged You understand, Tom? At once There is to be no delay of any kind

*Doctor* You mean no search party?

*Ransom* Nothing. If you like, I'll put that in writing. I forbid all useless risks. [*Smiling*] I order you to return to England alive.

*Doctor* [*smiling*] You'd better repeat that order to David personally.

*Ransom* It won't be necessary.

*Doctor*. What do you mean?

*Ransom* David is coming with me to the summit.

*Doctor* And Ian?

*Ransom* He'll remain with you here.

*Doctor* [*after a long pause*] I don't like it, M F.

*Ransom* Why not, Tom?

*Doctor* I suppose you know best, but—

*Ransom* Don't imagine I haven't thought this over carefully. I know what you are going to say. Ian is steady, reliable, a first-class climber, David is only a brilliant amateur, a novice with an extraordinary flair, unsound, uneven, liable to moments of panic, without staying power. Yes, it's all true.

*Doctor* Ian's wanted to do this climb with you more than he's ever wanted to do anything in his whole life.

*Ransom* I know. I've felt that, often. All these weeks, he's been on edge, straining every muscle and every nerve, never relaxing, torturing himself, denying himself, watching me like a dog waiting for a sign. Already he's utterly exhausted, he's a feverish invalid. Take this sickness of his as long as I've known him, Ian's never been sick on a mountain before. You see, Tom, the ascent of F 6 represents, for Ian, a kind of triumph which he not only desires but of which he's desperately afraid. He can't face it. He wants me to order him to face it. But if I do, it will destroy him.

*Doctor* [*after a pause*] Perhaps you're right, M F. . . Yes, I think you are. But surely—you've admitted it yourself—David is afraid, too?

*Ransom* David is afraid of precipices, avalanches, cornices, falling stones. He is afraid of being killed, not of dying. He is not afraid of F 6, nor of himself.

*Doctor* M F—The boys have their whole lives before them. Take me.

*Ransom* [*after a pause*] Yes, I'd thought of that, too. Thank you for asking me, Tom. I am very honoured.

*Doctor* Oh, I know it's impossible, of course. I'm a fat old man. The crystal was right. I shall die in my bed.

*Ransom* You will die at the end of a long and useful life. You will have helped a great many people and comforted all whom you could not help. . . But the Demon demands another kind of victim—

[*Whistling from GUNN, off. Enter GUNN and SHAWCROSS, R. Both of them are carrying stores. They cross the stage and enter the tent.*]

*Gunn* Hullo, M F! Hullo, Doc! Are we late for supper?

*Doctor* No, it's just ready now.

[*GUNN and SHAWCROSS put down their loads. SHAWCROSS is much exhausted. GUNN fresh and lively. RANSOM lights the tent lantern.*]

*Gunn* Gosh, I'm hungry! The altitude doesn't seem to affect my appetite. What is there to eat?

*Doctor* Cocoa and oatmeal.

[*Hands round rations.*]

*Gunn* Oatmeal again!

*Doctor* Perhaps you'd prefer a mutton chop?

*Gunn* Don't, Tom, you swine! You make my mouth water! The first thing I'll do when I get back, I'll stand you dinner at Boulestin's. We'll start with two dozen Royal Whitstables—

*Doctor* Oh, but David, Danish are much better!

*Gunn* Just as you like. What about soup? Minestrone, I think?

*Doctor* You have that. I prefer a really good tomato to anything.

*Gunn* And now, what would you say to Lobster Newburg?

*Doctor* I oughtn't to, really, but I can't resist.

*Gunn*. Good Lord! We've forgotten the wine!

*Shawcross* [*bitterly*] Must you always be talking about food?

*Gunn* Was I? Sorry.

*Shawcross* Well, for God's sake, shut up then!

[*A pause.*]

*Doctor*. You're not eating anything, Ian.

*Shawcross* I don't want any, thanks.

*Doctor* Take just a little. You must eat something, you know.

*Shawcross* [*angrily*] You heard me say No once. Are you going deaf?

Ransom Doctor's orders, Ian

Shawcross All right, M F If you say

so—

Ransom [*handing him his mug of cocoa*] Try this It's good

[SHAWCROSS *sips listlessly, putting the mug down almost at once*]

Gunn Thank God for my good dinner! Please may I get down? [*Pretending to strum on mandolin, sings*]

Some have tennis-elbow

And some have housemaid's knee,

And some I know have got B O

But these are not for me

There's love the whole world over

Wherever you may be,

I had an aunt who loved a plant—

But you're my cup of tea!

Doctor [*laughing and applauding*]

Bravo [GUNN *bows*] You know, M F., this reminds me of our first climb together, on the Meije Do you remember that hut?

Ransom And our Primus that wouldn't light? Shall I ever forget it?

Doctor And the fleas in the straw? Extraordinary the altitudes fleas can live at? Funny things, fleas If a flea were as big as a man, it could jump over St Paul's

Gunn When I was at school, I tried to keep a flea circus But I could never train them to do anything at all They're not really very intelligent

Doctor Perhaps you didn't get the right way about it A man told me once that if—

Shawcross [*passionately*] Oh, for Christ's sake, shut up!

Doctor Why, what's the matter, Ian?

Shawcross Do you expect me to sit listening to your drivel the whole night? Why do we keep pretending like this? Why don't we talk of what we're all thinking about? M F, I've had about as much of this as I can stand! You've got to tell us now which of us are you taking with you tomorrow?

Doctor Steady, Ian!

[*Puts a hand on his arm*]

Shawcross [*shaking him off*] Let me alone, damn you! I wasn't talking to you! M F., you've bloody well got to choose!

Ransom I have chosen, Ian I'm taking David

Shawcross Oh, my God! [*Pause*] And I knew it all the time!

Gunn Rotten luck, Ian I say, let

me stay behind

I don't mind, so very much

Shawcross [*shouting*] My God, do you think I'm going to crawl for favours to you, you little swine! You were always his favourite! I don't know how I've kept my hands off you so long!

[*He tries to throttle GUNN the Doctor seizes him*]

Doctor Ian, that's enough!

Shawcross [*struggling free*] Oh, I know—you're on his side, too! Do you think I haven't heard you whispering behind my back?

Ransom Is this what all your talk of loyalty amounts to, Ian? Tom and David have nothing to do with this I am in charge of this expedition If you have anything to complain of, be man enough to say so to me

Shawcross I'm sorry, M F Forgive me You're quite right I'm no damn good I realize that now You're all better men than I am I had a pretty fine opinion of myself, once I imagined I was indispensable Even my admiration of you was only another kind of conceit You were just an ideal of myself But F 6 has broken me, it's shown me what I am—a rotten weakling I'll never give orders to anybody again

Ransom No, Ian You're wrong F 6 hasn't broken you It has made a man of you You know yourself now Go back to England with Tom One day you will do something better worth while than this fool's errand on which David and I are going I am giving you a harder job than mine

Shawcross [*hesitating*] If I only could—! But you don't really believe it I see you don't! No one will ever— [*With rising excitement*] They'd look at me and think— No, I couldn't bear it! He failed—I can't—no, no— I'll never let them! Never!

[*He turns to rush out of the tent*]

Doctor Ian!

[*They struggle at the tent flap, SHAWCROSS breaks free and runs across to the rock above the precipice, the others following*]

Ransom Stop him!

Gunn Ian, you fool, come back!

[*SHAWCROSS, with a loud cry, springs over the precipice The others reach*

*the rock and stand peering down into  
the darkness. Gale noises and music]*

## CURTAIN

*Both Stage-boxes are illuminated In the  
right-hand Box, the A's are listening MRS  
A is adjusting the wireless MR A stands  
restlessly cleaning his pipe In the left-  
hand Box, the Announcer is at the micro-  
phone*

*Announcer* There is still no news of the  
British Expedition to F 6 Fort George re-  
ports that a severe blizzard is general over  
the whole range The gravest anxiety is felt  
as to their safety—

*Mr A* Turn off the wireless, we are tired  
of descriptions of travel,  
We are bored by the exploits of amazing  
heroes,  
We do not wish to be heroes, nor are we  
likely to travel

We shall not penetrate the Arctic Circle .  
And see the Northern Lights flashing far  
beyond Iceland,

We shall not hear the prayer from the min-  
aret echoing over Arabia

Nor the surf on the coral atoll

*Mrs A* Nor do we hope to be very dis-  
tinguished,

The embossed card of invitation is not for  
us,

No photographers lurk at our door,

The house-party and the grouse-moor we  
know by hearsay only,

We know of all these from the lending li-  
brary and the super cinema

*Mr A* They excite us, but not very  
much It is not our life

*Mrs A* For the skidding car and the  
neighbours' gossip

Are more terrifying to us than the snarling  
leap of the tiger;

And the shop-fronts at Christmas a greater  
marvel than Greece

*Mr A* Let our fears and our achieve-  
ments be sufficient to our day

*Mrs A* The luck at the bargain counter

*Mr A* The giant marrow  
grown on the allotment

*Mrs A* Our moments of exaltation have  
not been extraordinary

But they have been real

*Mr A* In the sea-side hotel, we expe-  
rienced genuine passion

*Mrs A* Straying from the charabanc, un-  
der tremendous beeches,

We were amazed at the profusion of blue-  
bells and the nameless birds,

And the Ghost Train and the switchback  
did not always disappoint

*Mr A* Turn on the wireless Tune in to  
another station,

To the tricks of variety or the rhythm of  
jazz

Let us roll back the carpet from the parlour  
floor

And dance to the wireless through the open  
door

*[They turn on the wireless and a dance  
band is heard The A's leave the box]*

*Announcer [sings]* Forget the Dead,  
what you've read,

All the errors and the terrors of the bed,  
Dance, John, dance!

Ignore the Law, it's a bore

Don't enumerate all the rumours of a war,

Dance, John, dance!

Chin up!

Kiss me!

Atta Boy!

Dance till dawn among the ruins of a burn-  
ing Troy!

Forget the Boss when he's cross,

All the bills and all the ills that make you  
toss

Dance, John, dance!

Some get disease, others freeze,

Some have learned the way to turn them-  
selves to trees,

Dance, John, etc

*[The Stage-boxes are darkened]*

## SCENE FOUR

*On F 6 The arête Hurricane Late  
afternoon RANSOM supporting GUNN*

*Ransom* Steady Lean on me

*Gunn* No, it's no use I can't go any  
further Help me down there, out of this  
bloody blizzard

*[They descend to a ledge]*

*[Collapsing]* Thanks But hurry Go on,  
now, and reach the top F 6 is a household  
word already The nursemaids in the park  
go into raptures The barber's chatter's full  
of nothing else You mustn't disappoint  
them In London now, they are unlocking  
the entrances to tubes I should be still  
asleep but not alone Toni was nice but



very difficult      Now no policeman will  
summons me again for careless driving  
They're flagging from the pits      I can-  
not stop      The brakes are gone  
Ian would be feeling as sick as a cat  
Where is that brake? Two hundred  
Christ, what banking!      [Dies]

Ransom You always had good luck, it  
has not failed you  
Even in this, your brightest escape,  
But extricates you now  
From the most cruel cunning trap of all,  
Sets you at large and leaves no trace behind,  
Except this dummy

O senseless hurricanes,  
That waste yourselves upon the unweared  
rock,  
Find some employment proper to your  
powers,  
Press on the neck of Man your murdering  
thumbs

And earn real gratitude! Astrologers,  
Can you not scold the fated loitering star  
To run to its collision and our end?  
The Church and Chapel can agree in this,  
The vagrant and the widow mumble for it  
And those with millions belch their heavy  
prayers

To take away this luggage Let the ape  
buy it

Or the insipid hen Is Death so busy  
That we must fidget in a draughty world  
That's stale and tasteless, must we still kick  
our heels

And wait for his obsequious secretaries  
To page Mankind at last and lead him  
To the distinguished Presence?

## CURTAIN

*The Stage-boxes remain darkened A  
voice from each is heard, in duet They are  
like people speaking in their sleep*

## Left Box

## Right Box

No news

Useless to wait

Too late

Their fate

Snow on the pass

We do not know

Nothing to report

Alas

Caught in the bliz-  
zardFought through the  
storm

## Left Box

## Right Box

Warm in our beds  
we wonder

Thunder and hail

Will they fail?  
Will they miss  
their success?

Yes They will die

We sigh We can-  
not aid

They fade from our  
mind

They find no breath

But Death

## SCENE FIVE

*F 6 The stage rises steeply, in a series of  
rock terraces, to the small platform at the  
back which forms the summit of the moun-  
tain Blizzard Gathering darkness In the  
front of the stage, RANSOM is struggling up-  
wards After a few numbed movements, he  
falls exhausted Music throughout The  
light now fades into complete darkness  
The voices of the chorus, dressed in the  
habit of the monks from the glacier monas-  
tery are heard*

Chorus Let the eye of the traveller con-  
sider this country and weep,  
For toads croak in the cisterns, the aque-  
ducts choke with leaves

The highways are out of repair and infested  
with thieves

The ragged populations are crazy for lack of  
sleep

Our chimneys are smokeless, the imple-  
ments rust in the field

And our tall constructions are felled

Over our empty playgrounds the wet winds  
sough,

The crab and the sandhopper possess our  
abandoned beaches,

Upon our gardens the dock and the darnel  
encroaches,

The crumbling lighthouse is circled with  
moss like a muff,

The weasel inhabits the courts and the sa-  
cred places,

Despair is in our faces

*[The summit of the mountain is illumi-  
nated, revealing a veiled, seated Fig-  
ure]*



*Chorus* For the Dragon has wasted the forest and set fire to the farm;  
He has mutilated our sons in his terrible rages  
And our daughters he has stolen to be victims of his dissolute orgies  
He has cracked the skulls of our children in the crook of his arm  
With the blast of his nostrils he scatters death through the land  
We are babes in his hairy hand

O, when shall the deliverer come to destroy this dragon?  
For it is stated in the prophecies that such a one shall appear,  
Shall ride on a white horse and pierce his heart with a spear,  
Our elders shall welcome him home with trumpet and organ,  
Load him with treasure, yes, and our most beautiful maidenhead  
He shall have for his bed

*[The veiled Figure on the summit raises its hand. There is a fanfare of trumpets. The Dragon, in the form of JAMES RANSOM, appears. He wears full ceremonial dress, with orders. He is illuminated by a spot-light. The CHORUS, throughout the whole scene, remain in semi-darkness.]*

*[As JAMES appears, the CHORUS utter a cry of dismay. JAMES bows to the Figure.]*

*James* I am sorry to say that our civilizing mission has been subject to grave misinterpretations. Our critics have been unhelpful and, I am constrained to add, unfair. The powers which I represent stand unequivocally for peace. We have declared our willingness to conclude pacts of non-aggression with all of you—on condition, of course, that our demands are reasonably met. During the past few years, we have carried unilateral disarmament to the utmost limits of safety, others, whom I need not specify, have unfortunately failed to follow our example. We now find ourselves in a position of inferiority which is intolerable to the honour and interests of a great power, and in self-defence we are reluctantly obliged to take the necessary measures to rectify the situation. We have constantly reiterated our earnest desire for peace, but in the face of unprovoked aggression I must utter a solemn warning to

you all that we are prepared to defend ourselves to the fullest extent of our resources against all comers

*[JAMES is seated. A DUET from the darkened Stage-boxes]*

*Duet* Him who comes to set us free  
Save, whoever it may be,  
From the fountain's thirsty snare,  
From the music in the air,  
From the tempting fit of slumber,  
From the odd unlucky number,  
From the riddle's easy trap,  
From the ignorance of the map,  
From the locked forbidden room,  
From the Guardian of the Tomb,  
From the siren's wrecking call,  
Save him now and save us all

*[Flourish on the wood-wind. MICHAEL RANSOM steps into the light which surrounds the Dragon. JAMES. He still wears his climbing things but is without helmet, goggles or ice-axe.]*

*James* Michael! Why have you come here? What do you want?

*Ransom* Hardly very friendly, are you?

*James* What is it this time? We are grown men now

*Ransom* There is no time to lose. I have come to make you a most important proposition

*James* Which I accept—on my own conditions

*[Makes a sign to the CHORUS]*

*Ransom* You are not being fair to me!

*James* Keep to your world. I will keep to mine

*[A chess table is brought into the light by two monks]*

*Chorus* But this man was never the figure in the priestess' vision,  
We expected a hero, at least, a magnificent shepherd

Or a forester, maybe, comely and cunning as a leopard

Beware lest he bring the prophecy into derision,

For, when he has paid for his folly and lies maimed in the dust,

The foolish shall lose their trust

Moreover, his pin-pricks can but incense the Dragon's anger,

Who will visit the insult upon our defenceless heads,

He will hale every tenth man from their shrieking beds,

The pressure of his hand shall weigh on us  
heavier and longer  
Better the destruction be easy and quickly  
over,

Or the innocent will suffer

[RANSOM and JAMES begin to play  
chess]

Chorus Let the Dragon deal with him  
sharply, then, as an impostor,  
Rend him in pieces, let the marrow be  
squeezed from the bone,  
Let him go to his death unapplauded and  
alone

May it never be said that we encouraged  
this boaster!

And let not the women, hearing his an-  
gushed cries,

Show sympathy in their eyes

[Complete silence, accompanied only  
by a drum roll At intervals, one or  
other of them says "Check"']

James Check!

Ransom [looking for the first time to-  
wards the summit and seeing the Figure]  
Look!

James Mate! I've won!

[The Figure shakes its head]

Ransom [with his eyes still fixed upon it]  
But was the victory real?

James [half rising to his feet and totter-  
ing In a choking voice] It was not Virtue  
—it was not Knowledge—it was Power!

[Collapses into his chair and falls for-  
ward over the chess table]

Chorus What have you done? What  
have you done? You have killed, you have  
murdered her favourite son!

[A figure having the shape of the AB-  
BOT, wearing a monk's habit and a  
judge's wig, and holding the crystal in  
his hands, is illuminated at a some-  
what higher level of the stage]

Abbot I am truly sorry for this young  
man, but I must ask for the court to be  
cleared

[The sound of a blues is heard Enter  
STAGMANTLE and LADY ISABEL, followed  
by monks with a stretcher The chess  
table is removed JAMES's body is laid  
on the stretcher and carried in slow  
procession round the stage, disappear-  
ing into the darkness]

Stagmantle and Isabel [together] Stop  
all the clocks, cut off the telephone,  
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy  
bone,

Silence the pianos and with muffled drum  
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead  
Scribbling on the sky the message He is  
dead

Put crepe bows round the white necks of  
the public doves

Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton  
gloves

Hold up your umbrellas to keep off the rain  
From Doctor Williams while he opens a  
vein,

Life, he pronounces, it is finally extinct  
Sergeant, arrest that man who said he  
winked!

Shawcross will say a few words sad and kind  
To the weeping crowds about the Master-  
Mind,

While Lamp with a powerful microscope  
Searches their faces for a sign of hope

And Gunn, of course, will drive the motor-  
hearse

None could drive it better, most would  
drive it worse

He'll open up the throttle to its fullest  
power

And drive him to the grave at ninety miles  
an hour

Abbot Please be seated, Mr Ransom  
I hope everything has been arranged here  
to your satisfaction?

Ransom I didn't do it! I swear I didn't  
touch him! It wasn't my fault! [Pointing  
to Figure] The Demon gave the sign, the  
Demon is real!

Abbot In that case, we will call the vic-  
tims of his pride Call Ian Shawcross!

Chorus Ian Shawcross!

[SHAWCROSS appears He is blood-  
stained and pale]

Ransom I've had about as much of this  
as I can stand You've got to tell them! I  
hate to bother you with this sort of thing  
Shawcross I'm afraid you haven't suc-  
ceeded very well

Ransom You mean, you did see some-  
thing? If you hadn't, you mightn't believe  
me

Shawcross Oh, for Christ's sake, shut up!  
If what you've done amuses you, I'm glad  
I'm not very tolerant, I'm afraid

[Exit]

Abbot Call David Gunn!

Chorus David Gunn!

[Enter DAVID GUNN, pale and covered with snow His face is entirely featureless]

Ransom David, you saw what happened?

Gunn Didn't I just? You did it beautifully! It was first class!

Ransom You sound pleased

Gunn Of course I'm pleased! Who wouldn't be!

Ransom David, there's something I must tell you—

[Exit GUNN]

Abbot Call Edward Lamp!

Chorus Edward Lamp! Edward Lamp! Edward Lamp!

Lamp's Voice [far away, off] I'm all right

Ransom [shouting] Teddy, what did you see?

Lamp's Voice If I told you, you wouldn't be any the wiser

Ransom You're on their side, too! Is this all your talk of loyalty amounts to?

[DOCTOR WILLIAMS appears]

Ransom Tom!

Doctor. Just tell me what you want me to do

Ransom I can't face it

Doctor Perhaps you are right The Demon demands another kind of victim Ask the crystal

[Exit Doctor]

Abbot You wish to appeal to the crystal, Mr Ransom? Do not ask at once, but think it over

Ransom We haven't a moment to lose I appeal to the crystal

Abbot Very well You have chosen for me [He stares into the crystal]

[Music DUET from the Stage-boxes]

Duet Love, look down from your white tower

And comfort us in the dark hour  
Save us from evil and from dolour

Abbot Mr Ransom, I did you an injustice I thought I understood your temptation, but I was wrong The temptation is not the Demon If there were no Demon, there would be no temptation

Ransom What have I said? I didn't mean it! Forgive me! It was all my fault F 6 has shown me what I am I withdraw the charge

Abbot Such altruism, Mr Ransom, is uncommon in one of your race But I am afraid it is too late now The case is being brought by the Crown [Turning to the Figure on the summit] Have you anything to say in your defence? [No answer] You realize the consequences of silence? [No answer] Beware of spiritual pride! [To CHORUS] Gentlemen, consider your verdict

Chorus. At last the secret is out, as it always must come in the end,

The delicious story is ripe to tell to the intimate friend,

Over the tea cups and in the square the tongue has its desire,

Still waters run deep, my dear, there's never smoke without fire

Behind the corpse in the reservoir, behind the ghost on the links,

Behind the lady who dances and the man who madly drinks,

Under the look of fatigue, the attack of migraine and the sigh

There is always another story, there is more than meets the eye

For the clear voice suddenly singing, high up in the convent wall,

The scent in the elder bushes, the sporting prints in the hall,

The croquet matches in summer, the handshake, the cough, the kiss,

There is always a wicked secret, a private reason for this

Abbot Have you considered your verdict?

Ransom Stop!

[RANSOM rushes up to the summit and places himself in front of the Figure, with his arms outstretched, as if to protect it]

Ransom No one shall ever—! I couldn't bear it! I'll never let them! Never!

Abbot [to CHORUS] Guilty or not guilty?

Chorus [all pointing at the Figure] Guilty!

[Thunder and the roar of an avalanche are heard At the word, all lights are extinguished below only the Figure and RANSOM remain illuminated RANSOM turns to the Figure, whose draperies fall away, revealing Mrs RANSOM, as a young mother]

Ransom Mother!

Mother My boy! At last!

[RANSOM falls at her feet with his head  
in her lap She strokes his hair]

Chorus Acts of injustice done  
Between the setting and the rising sun  
In history lie like bones, each one

Mother Still the dark forest, quiet the  
deep,  
Softly the clock ticks, Baby must sleep!  
The Polestar is shining, bright the Great  
Bear,

Orion is watching, high up in the air  
Chorus Memory sees them down there,  
Paces alive beside his fear  
That's slow to die and still here

Mother Reindeer are coming to drive  
you away

Over the snow on an ebony sleigh,  
Over the mountains and over the sea  
You shall go happy and handsome and free

Chorus The future, hard to mark,  
Of a world turning in the dark  
Where ghosts are walking and dogs bark

Mother Over the green grass pastures  
there

You shall go hunting the beautiful deer,  
You shall pick flowers, the white and the  
blue,

Shepherds shall flute their sweetest for you

Chorus True, Love finally is great,  
Greater than all, but large the hate,  
Far larger than Man can ever estimate

Mother And in the castle tower above  
The princess' cheek burns red for your love,  
You shall be king and queen of the land,  
Happy forever, hand in hand

Chorus But between the day and night  
The choice is free to all, and light  
Falls equally on black and white

[During the first verse of the chorale  
which follows, the light fades from the  
summit, so that the stage is completely  
darkened Then, after a moment, the  
entire stage is gradually illuminated by  
the rising sun All the figures have  
disappeared The stage is empty, ex-  
cept for the body of RANSOM, who lies  
dead on the summit of the mountain]

Hidden Chorus By all his virtues  
flouted,  
From every refuge routed  
And driven far from home,  
At last his journey ended,  
Forgiven and befriended,  
See him to his salvation come

[Morendo] Free now from indignation,  
Immune from all frustration  
He lies in death alone,  
Now he with secret terror  
And every minor error  
Has also made Man's weakness known  
[The curtain slowly falls]

The left-hand Stage-box is illuminated  
JAMES RANSOM, LORD STAGMANTLE, LADY  
ISABEL, the GENERAL and M BLAVEK are  
standing round the microphone

Stagmantle When the aeroplane flew  
over F 6 and came back with the news that  
Ransom's body had been seen on the sum-  
mit, the whole of England was plunged into  
mourning for one of her greatest sons, but  
it is a sorrow tempered with pride, that once  
again Englishmen have been weighed in the  
balance and not found wanting Monsieur  
Blavek, the leader of the intrepid Ostnian  
climbers, will tell you how he found the  
bodies I only wish to add—

James You mustn't run away with the  
idea that my brother was a simple person  
The strong silent man of the boy's adven-  
ture story He was very far removed from  
that—

Blavek [with a strong accent] It is a  
great honour for me to speak to you about  
Mr Ransom, and I want first to say how  
deeply we in Ostnia feel with you in the loss  
of so great a climber—

Isabel At this hour, the thoughts of the  
whole nation go out to a very brave and  
very lonely woman in a little South Coun-  
try cottage, already a widow and now a be-  
reaved mother We women who know what  
it means to sit at home while our nearest  
and dearest venture forth into unknown  
perils—

General I am no climber and I never  
met Ransom personally, but I know cour-  
age when I see it Ransom was a brave  
man and courage is the greatest quality a  
man can have—

James He had many sides to his char-  
acter and I doubt if anyone knew the whole  
man I as his brother certainly did not  
He had an almost feminine sensibility  
which, if it had not been allied to great  
qualities of soul and will-power and a first  
class intelligence, might easily have become  
neurotic—

Blavek Two days later, we reached the

summit and found him lying there His ice-axe lay on the rocks a little lower down——

*Stagmantle* Exactly what happened, we shall never know——

*James* But, as it was, no man had a more tender conscience, was more fanatically strict with himself on questions of motive and conduct——

*Blavek* We found the body of Gunn on the eastern arête, about five hundred feet below the summit——

*Stagmantle* It is probable that the bodies of Lamp and Shawcross will never be recovered, but while our thoughts are naturally centred upon their leader, their devotion to duty and their quiet heroism must never be forgotten——

*James* There was no sphere of human activity, whether in sport or scholarship or art, in which, if he had chosen, he could not have made supreme achievements But he hated publicity in any form, he felt it tainted——

*Isabel* The mountain took its toll of four young lives In the face of this terrible tragedy one is almost tempted to believe in the grim old legend of the Demon——

*Stagmantle* Acting on his express wishes, they will bury Ransom in the quiet country churchyard of the village where he spent his childhood And Gunn is to be laid to rest beside him——

*General* He died like a soldier at his post——

*Blavek* I am proud to have been beaten by such a man in this great climb——

*Stagmantle* As Monsieur Blavek has said, Sport transcends all national barriers

and it is some comfort to realize that this tragedy has brought two great nations closer together——

*James* He had all the qualities which fit a man for great office in the State, but he refused, for he dreaded the vulgarity and corruption of public life, and sometimes we poor devils who find ourselves in such positions wonder whether, perhaps, he wasn't right——

*Stagmantle* Their names are the latest but not the least of that long roll of heroes who gave their lives for the honour of this country——

*[The curtain rises In the centre of the stage, against the cyclorama, stands a plain obelisk, on which the word "Ransom" is engraved The A's are standing regarding it]*

*Isabel* Freely they gave——

*James* They did not count the cost——

*Stagmantle* Their name liveth for evermore——

*Isabel* They did not think of self——

*General* They died for England——

*James* Honour——

*Stagmantle* Service——

*General* Duty——

*Isabel* Sacrifice——

*Stagmantle* England——

*Blavek* Ostia——

*The Others* England! England! England!

*[The Stage-box is darkened]*

*Mr A* *[regarding the monument with proprietary pride]* He belongs to us, now!

*[The curtain slowly falls]*

THE END

# COMMAND DECISION

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

By WILLIAM WISTER HAINES

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## WILLIAM WISTER HAINES AND *COMMAND DECISION*

WILLIAM WISTER HAINES, novelist, script-writer, and telephone linesman, as well as dramatist, was born in Des Moines in 1908. Although distantly related to Owen Wister, popular romancer of an earlier generation, there was nothing in his early career to indicate that he would himself turn to literature. Rather, he worked intermittently from 1927 to 1934 stringing telephone wires and acquiring a B.S. in economics from the University of Pennsylvania.

It was his work as a linesman that inspired his first ventures as an author. In 1934, the *Atlantic Monthly* printed several short stories and *Slim*, a novel, all dealing with the colorful and somewhat melodramatic adventures of the men who work the high-tension wires. The great success of his novel sent him to Hollywood where he has continued to write scripts for such motion pictures as *Abbi Ike*, *The Black Legion*, and *The Long Grey Line*. During the Second World War he served forty-one months in the Army Air Forces, rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel.

As his novels grew out of his work as a linesman, so *Command Decision* grew out of his army career. He was, as he says, a "synthetic soldier," maintaining a somewhat objective view of his situation. Like the characters of the play, he was attached to a command post of the Eighth Air Force in England, where he watched his superiors sweating out decisions without having to make any for himself. His observations inspired him with the idea of writing a play about the effect of the pressures of command on individuals. The play was begun on V-J Day, but on its completion, at the suggestion of his publishers, it was converted into a novel and published early in 1947. The dramatic version was brilliantly produced by Kermit Bloomgarden in New York in the fall of 1947, with Paul Kelly as Dennis, Jay Fassett as Kane, and Paul McGrath as Garnett.

For a first production, *Command Decision* was highly successful. (An earlier play, *Happily Ever After*, had been discarded in 1938 because its theme depressed even the author.) It is significant that so serious a treatment of a war story should come within two years of the end of that war. The play is, further, unique in choosing to treat the problems of "the high brass" rather than the enlisted man. At least one of the New York critics found certain characters to be stereotypes and some situations conventional, but the conventional situations (the death of Ted Lawson, for instance) are only incidents in the plot, not its main concern, and the employment of a few stereotypes (the correspondent, the Congressman) enables the playwright to work with greater freedom on his major characters.

Further, *Command Decision* is an example of the continued vitality of the form of the well-made play in its single-minded concentration on the central problem, its tight, economical presentation of the situation, and the swift, streamlined progress of the story to its conclusion. The two dangers—that concentration might make the problem abstract, and dealing with higher echelons, remote—have been avoided by the use of a dramatic symbol, the great map which covers most of the rear wall of the setting. This map, which is the dramatization of "Operation Stitch," serves to humanize the problem of decision. More graphically than any dialogue, it makes plain the desperate nature of the undertaking, the plight of the personnel who must go far beyond fighter cover. The symbol brings home to the audience the human meaning of the decision which must be made. It enlarges the scope of the action beyond the confines of the Nissen hut, and it symbolizes also the broader theme of the play: the dilemma which confronts every man at some time in his life, and which can be resolved only by a decision made in the dark, or at terrible cost.

Mr. Haines' play may not become one of the classics of the modern theatre. It is, however, much more than a piece of dramatic journalism, special pleading, or melodrama; it is an example of the commercial, non-experimental stage at its most accomplished.



## CHARACTERS

WAR CORRESPONDENT ELMER BROCKHURST  
TECH SGT HAROLD EVANS  
BRIG GEN K C DENNIS  
COL ERNEST HALEY  
ENLISTED ARMED GUARD  
CAPTAIN LUCIUS JENKS  
MAJOR GENERAL ROLAND GOODLOW KANE  
BRIG GEN CLIFTON C GARNETT  
MAJOR HOMER PRESCOTT  
COL EDWARD MARTIN  
LT JAKE GOLDBERG  
MAJOR DESMOND LANSING  
MAJOR BELDING DAVIS  
MAJOR RUFUS DAYHUFF  
MR ARTHUR MALCOLM  
MR OLIVER STONE  
CAPTAIN G W C LEE  
N C O PHOTOGRAPHER

# COMMAND DECISION

## SETTING

The entire action of the play takes place in the office of Brigadier General K C Dennis at the Headquarters of the Fifth American Bombardment Division, Heavy, in England.

This office is the round-roofed end of a large Nissen hut. It is a conventional rectangle with a small alcove running back a few feet upstage right. Along the right wall, ranged from downstage upward, are a wastebasket labelled "Burn," a low sturdy chest labelled "Division Flag Locker." On wall pegs above "Division Flag Locker" hang GENERAL DENNIS's helmet, gas mask and service 45 in holster. American, British and Division flags droop from standards on floor. On right wall of alcove are three filing cabinets, one strap-locked and labelled "Top Secret." On back wall of alcove is a potbellied coal stove for heating coffee. In left wall of alcove a door gives on Operations Room, through it, as action indicates, the teleprinter may be heard clicking.

The back wall is covered by a curtain over the status board and a curtain over the map, both being opened as action indicates. Status board is a blackboard indicating minute by minute operational status of planes and crews in the Division's groups. The map is a G.S. G.S. 1 x 250,000 showing part of England, the Channel and North Sea and that part of Europe roughly bounded by the 48th parallel, north, and the 15th meridian, east.

Over the status board is hung a large, ripped-off section of a German fighter plane, its marking cross clearly visible to audience. At left of map, by door in back wall, are four light switches, two for the long strip light that illuminates the map and one each for lights above GENERAL DENNIS's desk and the map table. An unmounted souvenir Browning 50 machine gun stands on floor, under light switches, erect, barrel wired to wall.

The door, back wall left, leads to the ante-room of the General's office. Legend, "Commanding General," may be seen in re-

verse lettering on its opaque glass. Left of door in corner are three tommy guns in a rack. Along left wall, running down are a fire extinguisher and A.R.P. sand and water buckets and a cot. Left wall itself is a large window giving on the perimeter track and landing strips of the operating group based on Division Headquarters Airfield. Window is blacked out by curtains in night scenes.

Right of center is GENERAL DENNIS's big flat-topped desk facing left, his name plate on lower end of it plainly discernible to audience. Arm chair behind it (right of it) and one for visitors just before it. Left of center is a large (three by six feet) map table. There is a chair at its right, a draughtsman's stool behind it. A rack under it holds rolls of maps and the "Speed at Altitude, Performance Chart" of the German fighter plane, exhibited as action indicates. A long pointer, for use at map, is kept in this rack. At rise of first act curtain a 1'-½" step-up is under map table.

The first act begins about four o'clock on a Saturday afternoon. The second act is divided. Scene One begins about ten o'clock that Saturday night. Scene Two begins about noon on Sunday the following day. The third act begins about eight o'clock that same Sunday evening.

## ACT ONE

Curtain rises on empty room. Coffee bubbles on stove. TECH SGT HAROLD EVANS enters. EVANS is a tough, independent graduate gunner of twenty-five who has finished his missions and taken a job as the General's man to improve his food, drink, and amusement.

He pours himself coffee, goes to desk, selects and lights one of the General's cigars and returns with it to coffee at table.

Settles comfortably to cigar and coffee, then scowls as door opens and War Correspondent ELMER BROCKHURST enters. BROCKHURST, middle-aged, reflects the cocky, contemptuous power of the big magazine he represents.

*Brockhurst* Is General Dennis in, Sergeant?

*Evans* Does it look like it?

*Brockhurst* Seriously, Joe

*Evans* My name isn't Joe Who let you in here?

[*BROCKHURST goes to mask over wall map, scrutinizes it eagerly*]

Who let you in here?

*Brockhurst* I can't hear you

[*EVANS steps to tommy-gun rack, grabs a gun, ejects shell onto floor, covers*

*BROCKHURST*]

Look out! That thing might go off!

*Evans* Might hell! Who let you in here?

*Brockhurst* I've got a pass

*Evans* I seen General Dennis tear it up

*Brockhurst* I've got a new pass, from General Dennis's boss

*Evans* Walk it over here, slow!

[*Scared, BROCKHURST does EVANS reads*]

"Elmer Brockhurst, accredited correspondent of *Coverage*"

"that magazine with all the hatchet murders and naked dames?"

*Brockhurst* Yeah

*Evans* "has my authorization to visit any Army Air Forces installation in my command signed" Who?

*Brockhurst* Major General R G Kane that's who

*Evans* A goddamned old major general and can't sign his name clear enough to read No this is old Percent himself

[*He racks tommy gun, returns pass, sits down to coffee Relieved, BROCKHURST turns chummy*]

*Brockhurst* Percent?

*Evans* Kane cause of that publicity about what Percent of Germany his gallant forces destroy every afternoon, weather permitting

*Brockhurst* He tops your boss, anyway

*Evans* Keep away from that map When Dennis sees you, he'll spit a snake

[*BROCKHURST flinches, pours coffee*]

*Brockhurst* Where is that Fascist megalomaniac?

*Evans* Who?

*Brockhurst* Dennis, that's what he is, a Fascist megalomaniac

*Evans* What's that?

*Brockhurst* A man so drunk with power

he thinks he can cover anything he does with other people's blood

*Evans* How long you been around the army?

*Brockhurst* Long enough to know that's what Dennis is

*Evans* That's what all generals are

*Brockhurst* Where is he, Serge? Sleeping till the mission comes in?

*Evans* You must love that guardhouse, pumping me about missions

*Brockhurst* Having Dennis lock me in that guardhouse taught me a lot of angles What became of that German pilot he had there?

*Evans* That isn't a lot of angles that's one

*Brockhurst* What about that German fighter plane Dennis has under close guard in Hangar Four? the one he's been flying himself lately Why did he take the worst losses of the war yesterday and then send his bombers even deeper into Germany today?

*Evans* I thought you knew the angles

*Brockhurst* I know he's got one of his own squadron commanders under close arrest in the guardhouse right now

[*EVANS starts BROCKHURST presses his advantage*]

Why?

*Evans* He's a bad boy won't brush his teeth

*Brockhurst* Don't you guys realize that a free press is your protection?

*Evans* Why don't you write your Congressman?

*Brockhurst* I think he already knows it Cliff Garnett arrived in England last night by special plane

*Evans* Who's he?

*Brockhurst* Brigadier General Clifton C Garnett is Secretary to the United Chiefs of Staff in Washington

*Evans* Oh, God! Now we'll never get the war over

*Brockhurst* I'll bet you Dennis's war is over this week

*Evans* You think they'd fire Dennis for one of them Pentagon bell hops?

*Brockhurst* Serge, ever since General Lucas got killed and Dennis took over here the country's been shuddering at his losses people are whispering calling Dennis the Butcher of Bombardment

*Evans* Oh, my aching back

*Brockhurst* Wait and see! Cliff Garnett should have had this job in the first place he's a smart operator and the United Chiefs trust him

*Evans* They never fired no general yet till they'd give him the Legion of Merit and Dennis ain't got one

*Brockhurst* They can give 'em mighty quick Going to miss your hero?

*Evans* He's no hero to me I just taken this job—after my twenty-eight missions—to chisel my way to what I really want

*Brockhurst* Serge, I know R G Kane pretty well what would you like?

*Evans* Bartender in a rest camp for battle-weary WACS

*Brockhurst* Listen, Serge, Dennis is a ruptured duck But a couple of angles on this deal would be worth some whiskey to me What became of that German pilot Dennis had in the guardhouse?

*Evans* Whiskey or Scotch?

*Brockhurst* Bonded bourbon

*Evans* How much?

*Brockhurst* Four bottles

*Evans* You gave Peterson in the guardhouse two cases just for making the phone call that got you out of there

*Brockhurst* I did like hell! I gave Peterson one case [*Stops, realizing he's tricked*] Okay Call it a case for the whole story, though

*Evans* [*secretively*] Dennis had him locked in there till last night

*Brockhurst* [*eagerly*] Yeah?

*Evans* but yesterday the quartermaster run out of Spam Dennis said by God he'd promised the men meat for breakfast and if they wasn't no other meat we'd just have to use that Kraut pilot

*Brockhurst* Okay you got your joke I've still got my whiskey

[*BROCKHURST exits EVANS jumps to phone and speaks into it*]

*Evans* Guardhouse Corporal Peterson, this is Tech Sergeant Evans in the General's office Bring six of them twelve marbles you just won you know, them tall glass marbles with labels on 'em, to me personally in the General's ante-room You heard me well, Jesus Christ, I'm giving you half of 'em ain't I? Okay they better be

[*Hangs up, listens, puts cigar in ash tray on desk and jumps to attention as*  
BRIGADIER GENERAL K C DENNIS en-

*ters DENNIS is about forty, prepossessing, forceful, usually so preoccupied as to appear slightly absent-minded Does not notice cigar but heard phone click*]

*Dennis* Was that for me?

*Evans* No, sir

*Dennis* Any word since the strike message from the mission?

*Evans* No, sir

[*DENNIS picks up the cigar and begins smoking it, his mind is on business*]

*Dennis* Ask Colonel Haley to step in and have the guard bring Captain Jenks [*EVANS exits DENNIS walks to window and studies sky* COLONEL ERNEST HALEY enters *He is Regular Army, literal, carries papers*] Anything more from the mission?

*Haley* Just Colonel Martin's radio I woke you for, sir. [*Reads it from paper*] "Primary target plastered Warm here Martin"

*Dennis* "Warm"

*Haley* Intelligence said they'd fight today, sir

*Dennis* What about the weather for tomorrow?

*Haley* No change since last reading, sir

*Dennis* Good How many planes can I count on having?

[*HALEY strips curtain mask, revealing Division status, a welter of chalk columns on a blackboard showing minute by minute status of groups' planes and crews EVANS enters quietly and stands at ease through this*]

*Haley* Thirteen minor repairs promised by fifteen hundred, eighteen from major repair by twenty-three hundred, twenty-two Maidenheads from Modification arriving stations now and thirty of those weather-bound new ones took off from Iceland at eleven hundred this morning, sir

*Dennis* Are the newcomers from Iceland flying ferry crews or replacements?

*Haley* Mostly ferry, sir But we've got twelve crews back from Flak houses, eighteen from Leave and Sick and twenty-eight new ones from Combat Crew Replacement Center today, sir

*Dennis* And twelve crews finish their missions today?

*Haley* If they get back, sir

*Dennis* We lose 'em anyway How many would graduate tomorrow?

*Haley* Depends on who gets back today, sir

*Dennis* Well, on averages few enough to hold 'em over for an easy last mission?

*Haley* Fourteen . . maybe But they're your lead crews, sir

*Dennis* How do the boys feel, Haley?

*Haley* They're too tired to feel, sir

*Dennis* What else?

*Haley* [*fingering papers unhappily*] Another rape case, I'm afraid, sir

*Dennis* Combat crew or base personnel?

*Haley* A navigator, sir

*Dennis* Nuts When's a navigator had time to get raped?

*Haley* Complaint was he did the raping, sir Last night

*Dennis* Between yesterday's mission, and today's ? Who's complaining, the girl or her mother?

*Haley* Her mother, sir Mrs Daphne Magruder, Tranquility Cottage, The High Street, Undershot-Overhill

*Evans* I know them people, sir

*Dennis* No doubt Did our boy go there alone, Haley?

*Haley* I'm afraid he did, sir

*Dennis* Haley! I've told you before when these boys tomcat, they're to go in pairs How can you expect one man, flying missions, to keep the whole family happy? Have you told the Judge Advocate?

*Haley* Not yet, sir We're badly bottlenecked for navigators and this man has ten missions more to go on his twenty-five

*Evans* Would the General like to square that is, to have this matter attended to by negotiation, sir?

*Dennis* Yes

*Evans* If I could have two gallons of ice cream from mess supply .

*Dennis* Get it and get going

*Evans* With the General's permission, sir, these matters are better negotiated after dark.

*Dennis* All right What else, Haley?

*Haley* [*reading paper unhappily*] Sir, the Society for the Preservation of Cultural and Artistic Treasures against Vandalism says it was our Division that bombed that cathedral You remember, sir, the man said he was shot up

*Dennis* I remember he was shot up

*Haley* Yes, sir But next time out that man got hit himself He's in the hospital now and says he wants to tell the truth He says the war's turned him into an Atheist and when he saw he couldn't reach the target with his bombs he threw 'em into that Cathedral, just to show God what he thought of His lower echelons

*Dennis* Could he have got back to base with his bombs?

*Haley* [*hedging*] He was deep in France with one motor shot out, sir

*Dennis* Go to the hospital and chew his ass out Tell him for me we don't haul bombs through the submarine belt to waste on Atheism or any other religion and it better not happen again Then write the Society it was an emergency necessary to save life What else?

*Haley* Nothing official, sir, but

*Dennis* But what?

[*HALEY looks sharply at EVANS who reluctantly exits*]

*Haley* Grapevine says General Kane's in a huddle with the Hemisphere Commander, sir

*Dennis* What's that got to do with us?

*Haley* Grapevine says there's a big meeting in Washington next week and neither of them is invited

*Dennis* That's their worry [*Then, anxiously*] What day next week?

*Haley* No one knows, sir

*Dennis* Well, tomorrow's only Sunday you're sure the weather hasn't changed?

*Haley* No, sir last forecast is still fine

*Dennis* Well, then we'll finish before the meeting

*Haley* I hope so, sir

*Dennis* We haven't had any squawk from Washington yet ?

*Haley* Not yet, sir

*Dennis* Send Captain Jenks in here

*Haley* Want me with you, sir?

*Dennis* No I'll try him alone again [*Checks HALEY at door*] Has that cable come for Ted Martin yet?

*Haley* Not yet, sir I've been checking Mrs Martin must be late with that baby

*Dennis* [*absently*] She's ten years late [*Then, noticing HALEY's surprise*]

Keep checking, I'd like to meet Ted with good news when he lands [*HALEY exits DENNIS takes a troubled look at the sky, seats himself with a dossier of papers at*

*desk* A knock is heard at the door] Come in!

[CAPTAIN LUCIUS JENKS enters, followed by an ARMED GUARD JENKS is an ordinary looking kid in flying coveralls, momentarily sullen GUARD follows him to position facing desk and salutes]

Guard Guard reporting with prisoner as ordered, sir

Dennis Wait outside

[GUARD exits]

Jenks, have you thought this over?

Jenks [stomily] I thought it over this morning

Dennis You've had more time

Jenks I don't need more time

Dennis Damn it, boy, don't you realize this is serious?

Jenks I'm not getting killed to make you a record I'll tell the court so, too, and the whole damned world

Dennis What else will you tell them?

Jenks That you lost forty bombers, four hundred men, by deliberately sending us beyond fighter cover yesterday This morning, when we're entitled to a milk run you order us even further into Germany

Dennis Who told you you were entitled to a milk run?

Jenks You big boys think flak-fodder like us can't even read a calendar, don't you? Where do the Air Forces get those statistical records for sorties and tonnages that General Kane announces regularly? They get 'em on milk runs, over the Channel Ports, the last three days of every month

Dennis Twelve crews took today's target for their last mission

Jenks They didn't have the guts to say what they thought of it If you big shots are entitled to a record racket, so am I

Dennis You were informed, at briefing, of the purpose of this mission

Jenks "A very significant target that can kill a lot of our people unless we knock it out" Nuts to that pep talk! Everything in Germany's made to kill people Why can't we have targets under fighter cover, like General Kane promised?

Dennis He didn't promise that

Jenks Anyone who knows the Army knows what Kane's

Dennis General Kane's

Jenks General Kane's press inter-

view meant That day we lost nineteen over Bremfurt and the Air Corps turned itself inside out, explaining How do you think the public will like forty yesterday and worse today?

Dennis The public isn't my business

Jenks How do you think it will like hearing you ordered both these attacks when Kane General Kane was absent

Dennis And that isn't your business You were ordered to go After learning the target you refused

Jenks I've been to plenty tough targets

Dennis [fingering dossier] You aborted from the two toughest prior to yesterday

Jenks For mechanical malfunctions in my plane

Dennis One engineer's examination said "Possibly justifiable" The other said "Defect not discernible"

Jenks It was plenty discernible to me and my co-pilot will tell you the same thing, unless he's prejudiced

Dennis He should be, he's flying your seat today, and you're a squadron commander The Army had trusted you with command [This bites, JENKS has begun to look scared DENNIS resumes patiently] Now, if you've got any legitimate reason at all

[EVANS enters, announces with a note of warning]

Evans Major General R. G. Kane and party, sir

[DENNIS jumps to attention as KANE and party enter JENKS steps into background KANE, a shrewd man of fifty odd, tough but capable of a calculated amiability, which is currently on display, leads Next comes BRIGADIER GENERAL CLIFTON C. GARNETT, a virile man in late thirties, meticulously dressed KANE's aide, MAJOR HOMER PRESCOTT, a genteel stooge, follows JENKS remains in background as DENNIS mends his military manners, saluting EVANS exits]

Dennis I'm very sorry, sir If I'd known you were visiting my command I should have been at the gate

Kane Don't speak of it, my boy! You remember Cliff Garnett, of course?

Dennis [offering GARNETT hand] Sir, I was best man when Ted Martin married Cliff's sister

Garnett Casey, how are you?

Dennis Fine

Garnett I want you to know we all felt terribly when Joe Lucas was killed

[DENNIS glances at KANE, who shakes his head slightly]

Dennis So did we

Garnett But I don't mind telling you some of us in Washington were mighty glad you were here to take over his job

Kane [*manifestly changing subject*] Cliff here wanted to see a real operational headquarters so I brought him straight down without waiting on protocol

Dennis How's the Pentagon, Cliff?

Garnett [*nettled*] A little worried about you, Casey

Dennis Well, that gives them something to do

Garnett I hope it won't be something we wouldn't like

Dennis Are you over for long?

Garnett You never know My orders just said, "Tour of Observation "

Kane [*cutting this off*] And my new aide, Major Prescott, General Dennis

Prescott How do you do, sir? I'm very happy to meet the commander of our famous Fifth Division

[BROCKHURST enters]

Brockhurst I had a hunch you'd come down here today, R G

Dennis General Kane, I've forbidden this man the station

Kane Now, Casey, that's one of the things I came down about

Dennis He was snooping in a restricted hangar and trying to worm information out of my people I had him in the guardhouse until your counter-order

Brockhurst Kane, the American people are going to be very interested in Dennis's guardhouse

[KANE sees JENKS, hastens to change subject]

Kane Why, Captain Jenks! Delighted to see you again, my boy

Jenks Thank you, sir

[KANE throws a paternal arm around JENKS, and leads him to GARNETT]

Kane Cliff, this is one of our real heroes!

Garnett Is this the Captain Jenks who named his Fortress the Urgent Virgin?

Kane The best publicity we've had in this war! Three pages and ten pictures in Brockie's magazine What brings you to

headquarters today, my boy? Helping General Dennis?

Dennis A disciplinary matter, sir We'll attend to it later Jenks!

[DENNIS indicates door, but KANE stops JENKS]

Kane No, no! This is what you wanted to see, Cliff, real field problems Now, Casey, you and Captain Jenks carry on just as if we weren't here If there's one thing I pride myself on it's not interfering with the vital work of my Divisions

Dennis This isn't a matter for the press, sir

Kane [*sharply*] Brockie is my friend, General! [*Then, to JENKS*] What's the disciplinary trouble, my boy? Some of those high-spirited young pilots of yours getting out of hand?

Jenks Perhaps General Dennis will explain, sir

Dennis Captain Jenks refused to fly today's mission as ordered, sir

[BROCKHURST whistles Others react, shocked]

Kane I can't believe it

Jenks Do you know what today's target was, General Kane?

Dennis [*sharply*] Captain, you're still under security regulations There will be no mention of today's target before the press!

Brockhurst Security covers a lot, doesn't it, Dennis?

Dennis The life of every man we send across the Channel

Brockhurst What about the life of this boy, under you?

Kane [*to BROCKHURST*] Brockie, there is a question of security, if you don't mind

Brockhurst O.K., R G I was trying to help you

[BROCKHURST exits]

Dennis The target was Schweinhafen, sir

Kane Schweinhafen! You've begun Operation Stitch?

Dennis Began yesterday, sir, with Posenleben

Kane POSENLEBEN yesterday? What happened?

Dennis Excellent results, sir Over three quarters total destruction

Kane I mean what were your losses?

Dennis Forty planes, sir

Kane FORTY! Good God! Does the press know it?

Dennis I put a security blackout on the whole operation as we agreed

Garnett [sharply] Would someone mind telling a visitor the details of this Operation Stitch?

Dennis Kind of a three horse parlay, Cliff, Posenleben, Schweinhafen [Eyes PRESCOTT and JENKS] And one other

Garnett Well, I thought I'd written your directive myself!

Dennis Some things aren't in official directives, Cliff

Garnett Evidently But the United Chiefs are still running the war, Casey Have you taken it on yourself to change their orders?

Kane I was going to send them a provisional plan for Operation Stitch but [lamely] I didn't know General Dennis intended implementing it so soon It takes a very rare weather condition

Prescott The whole idea was General Dennis's, sir!

Dennis And I'll explain it myself, Major! Do you wish to detain Captain Jenks any further, General Kane?

[KANE wishes he were dead but he has to deal with this]

Kane Did you go on the Posenleben mission yesterday, Captain?

Jenks I did, sir It was a bloody massacre Today will be worse

Kane Any news from today's mission yet, General?

Dennis Colonel Martin radioed "Primary target plastered," sir

Kane I mean news about losses

Dennis Ted indicated fighting, sir, but no details

[GARNETT reacts perceptibly to mention of Ted]

I see no further need of Captain Jenks at this conference, sir

Kane General, as you know, I pride myself on never interfering with the functioning of my subordinate echelons But in a case that touches one of our combat personnel, I know you will forgive an older commander's concern With your permission, I should like to speak to Captain Jenks alone

Dennis [to others stonily] If you gentlemen will come with me

Kane No, no You and Cliff stay right here We'll step outside

[KANE, JENKS and PRESCOTT exit GARNETT faces DENNIS accusingly]

Garnett So Ted Martin is flying missions!

Dennis He led the Division today yesterday, too

Garnett Casey, do you think this is fair to my sister?

Dennis Cliff, when Helen married Ted, she married the service

Garnett They've waited ten years for this baby It's due this week Ted shouldn't be flying missions at all at his age, let alone just now

Dennis He gets paid to.

[GARNETT starts, checks himself, smiles]

Garnett I went to see your family just before leaving, Casey I've got some letters for you

Dennis Thanks How are they?

Garnett Fine! And terribly proud of you That pretty daughter of yours says to tell you she's learned to spell three words

Dennis [pleased, covering] I hope one of them is "No"

Garnett She's a charmer, Casey And young William Mitchell Dennis sent you special orders You're to destroy all of Germany except one little piece he wants saved for his first bomb He asked if I thought you could do it

Dennis What did you tell him?

Garnett I told him, with war, you never know

Dennis Let's see he was ten this month Eight more years would be pretty slow even for the United Chiefs

Garnett [nettled] Casey, you're too old for this brass-baiting The United Chiefs have their headaches, too [Then, with concern] Helen is very worried about Ted

Dennis Is she?

Garnett You know that always was the trouble between them

Dennis Was it?

Garnett In the old days, when you and he were testing those experimental jobs she got so she couldn't even answer the phone That's why she wouldn't have kids then, she had no security

Dennis Neither did the other girls, Cliff

Garnett [defensively] I know she left him But think of her side of it Five years in boarding houses on second lieutenant's



pay Then the morning he made first he had to call his commanding officer a god-damned fool

*Dennis* That's what he was

*Garnett* maybe But Ted was a second lieutenant again by lunch That afternoon he turned down twelve thousand a year from the best airline in America What would you have thought?

*Dennis* That he was a rare guy

*Garnett* She's realized that, Casey She did go back to him

*Dennis* What's all this leading to?

*Garnett* Does Ted think she came back to him and is having that kid just because he is pretty secure now?

*Dennis* Ask Ted what he thinks

*Garnett* He and I were never very close You know what he thinks of you

*Dennis* Maybe that's because I don't try to run his life

*Garnett* You don't have to waste it Ted is too valuable to be flying missions

*Dennis* What's more important?

[*GARNETT hesitates, evades*]

*Garnett* Casey, the service needs Ted for bigger jobs And he and Helen deserve a little security now You don't have to send him at his age

*Dennis* I don't have to send any of 'em We could all be secure, under Hitler

[*KANE, JENKS and PRESCOTT enter*]

*KANE is grave but more assured*

*Kane* General Dennis, Captain Jenks is obviously the victim of a shock condition induced by the strain of his nineteen missions It's a medical problem All he needs is rest

*Dennis* Sir, Captain Jenks finished ten days in a rest house on Thursday and has been medically certified fit for the completion of his twenty-five missions

[*KANE looks apoplectic PRESCOTT scrambles for a new excuse*]

*Prescott* Captain Jenks, did you know of any defect in your plane

*Dennis* His co-pilot took the plane It has not aborted

*Kane* [*catching the straw*] We won't know until the plane comes back We'll continue the investigation later, General

*Dennis* Guard! [*GUARD enters, takes place behind JENKS*] Return the prisoner to the guardhouse

[*GUARD and JENKS exeunt*]

*Kane* General, this is very serious

*Dennis* Every detail will be checked, sir It happened at five-twenty this morning I've got the rest of the twenty-four hours to charge him

*Kane* What charge are you considering?

*Dennis* Unless something new comes up the only possible charge is "Desertion in the face of the enemy"

*Kane* Good God, boy! We can't shoot a national hero!

*Dennis* Do you think you'll ever have another tough mission if you don't? At group briefing this morning when the target was uncovered I saw five men cross themselves One fainted But they went and they know that Jenks didn't

[*KANE understands but won't face the implication PRESCOTT tries again*]

*Prescott* Couldn't a quiet transfer be arranged to transport or training?

*Dennis* So he could go yellow there and kill passengers or students?

*Prescott* Precautions could be taken There's such a thing as the end justifying the means, sir This case would put the honor of the Army Air Forces at stake

*Dennis* It already has Every man in the Division knows it

*Prescott* I was thinking of the larger picture

*Dennis* You can afford to

*Kane* Homer, go talk this over with Elmer Brockhurst everything

*Dennis* Sir!

*Kane* Brockie has a remarkable feel for public reaction, Casey We've got to consider every angle on this

[*PRESCOTT exits*]

[*DENNIS extends JENKS' 201 file to KANE*]

*Dennis* Look at the Engineers' reports on his two previous abortions

*Kane* [*ignoring file*] Have you talked to his group commander?

*Dennis* Didn't you get yesterday's reports, sir?

*Kane* No I've been with the hemisphere commander Why?

*Dennis* Colonel Ledgrave went down yesterday, sir

*Kane* My God! Leddy any parachutes seen?

*Dennis* Two, from the waist But Leddy was riding with the bombardier and she exploded just as the waist gunners got out

[KANE is visibly affected, GARNETT shocked]

Garnett That's Roger Ledgrave, class of '29?

Dennis Yeah

Garnett Casey, is it necessary . . for our own people to go so often?

Dennis Yes

Kane Casey, had Leddy never mentioned Captain Jenks to you?

Dennis Never, sir

Kane That's my oversight I had told him, in confidence, that since that publicity in *Coverage* we've been advised to be very careful of Captain Jenks

Dennis I wish I had been told that, sir

[Awkward pause, GARNETT breaks it]

Garnett How soon will today's mission be landing, Casey?

Dennis In six or seven minutes

Garnett General Kane, I must insist on being briefed about this Operation Stitch The United Chiefs will have to know

Dennis [shocked] Haven't you told him anything about it, sir?

Kane I thought it would be fairer to let you

[DENNIS reacts, settles to work]

Dennis Six weeks ago a German fighter plane landed on that number one strip, right outside the window there

Garnett Shot up?

Dennis Not a scratch The pilot was a Czechoslovakian engineer He'd been forced to work for them but when they sent him up to the Baltic to test this job he flew it here to us

Garnett Accommodating of him

Dennis That cross was the plane marking I hung it there as a reminder

Garnett What kind of fighter was it?

Dennis Focke-Schmidt 1

Garnett Focke-Schmidt 1 ?

Dennis Remember that spy's report out of Lisbon on a new jet propelled fighter Messerschmidt wing, the new Serrenbach propulsion unit forty-eight thousand ceiling and six hundred at thirty thousand?

Garnett Our people said that was impossible

Dennis I know These are the tests of it [DENNIS strips a curtain mask, revealing performance curves inked on graph paper Red, blue, green and yellow curves are closely grouped, almost parallel Above,

obviously in a class by itself is the heavy black curve of the Focke-Schmidt 1 DENNIS indicates colors as he talks] Lightning, Thunderbolt, Mustang, Spit Twelve and Focke-Schmidt 1!

Garnett Jesus Christ! Oh, the German job's in kilometers

Dennis No it isn't That's miles same as the others

Garnett Who made these tests?

Dennis Ted Martin and I

Garnett Yourselves?

Dennis Three turns apiece

Garnett [awed, tracing black curve] You did that after what the doctors told you?

Dennis I wanted to be sure It gave me a week in the hospital to think things over

[GARNETT examines the curves, impressed, rueful]

Garnett Of course our new Mustangs will be a great improvement

Dennis This isn't an improvement, Cliff This is a revolution

Garnett Even so, when you get enough of our new Mustangs .

Dennis Can you arrange an armistice until we get 'em?

Garnett Casey, I've battled the United Chiefs for every bomber you've got I've stuck my neck out to get you Mustangs to protect them I've fought for this Air Corps just as hard as you have Now, when will the Germans get these jets?

Dennis They have three factories entering line production now or rather, they did have, yesterday morning

Garnett New factories?

Dennis No They've converted old bomber plants The Czech engineer thinks they've got one operating group on conversion training already

Garnett Have you lost any planes to it?

Dennis Lost planes don't report But last week we wrote off three reconnaissance planes for the first time in months They were stripped to the ribs and flying at forty thousand but something got them

Kane Of course, we don't know it was this new jet

Dennis It wasn't mine [Moves to map and opens it] I've flown this plane and we've photographed the three factories

Garnett Weren't they camouflaged?

Dennis Perfectly We put an infra-red camera on a night fighter and caught 'em

after dark with Focke-Schmidts on every apron [*Indicates three marked spots on map*] Posenleben, Schweinhafen and Fendelhorst That's Operation Stitch, for Stitch in Time

Garnett They're deep enough in, aren't they?

Dennis Goering is thinking better of us these days

Garnett How far beyond friendly fighter cover is that? [DENNIS swings the conventional arc, it is woefully short of the marks] Casey, it's murder to send bombers that far beyond friendly fighter cover

Kane And I don't think it's necessary. This jet fighter may have a superior capability on paper, or even when it's flown by men like Casey and Ted Martin But when I consider American courage and airmanship

Dennis [*indicating graphed performance curves*] Courage and airmanship don't fill gaps like this, sir

Garnett Why hasn't this technical data been reported?

Dennis It has Through channels You'll hear from it next year

Garnett What's your honest opinion of this, Casey?

Dennis This can run us out of Europe in sixty days

Kane [*protestingly*] That's giving them absolute perfection in production, in testing, in crew conversion, in tactics

Dennis That's giving them thirty days to get two groups operating and thirty more to catch one of our missions for just half an hour I put that in my report

Garnett [*sharply*] Why didn't you send this report to us?

[DENNIS is silent KANE has to answer]

Kane I did report to the United Chiefs that we could not exclude the possibility of encountering an unsuspected enemy capability which might compel retrospective alteration of our present estimate of the situation

Garnett Did you approve this Operation Stitch, sir?

[KANE glares But GARNETT is secretary to the United Chiefs]

Kane I told General Dennis this constitutes a tactical emergency within the scope of a Division commander's discretion

Dennis It's my rap, Cliff I consider the operation necessary

Garnett Your losses are the United Chiefs' rap, Casey Remember, half of them are admirals A very substantial body of opinion doesn't believe we can succeed with daylight precision bombardment over Germany

Dennis A very substantial body of opinion didn't believe the Wright brothers could fly

Garnett Casey, you'll have to know it The United Chiefs are having a global re-allocation meeting, next Tuesday

Dennis [*shocked*] Global re-allocation, next Tuesday?

Garnett. To review the whole record

Dennis Are they getting cold feet on precision bombardment?

Garnett It's making a terrible drain on our best industrial capacity and the very cream of our manpower

Kane They were upset about our losses, even before this week

Dennis Cliff, were you sent here to slow us up?

Garnett Not specifically, but our people felt I should warn you, because you might even scare the United Chiefs into abandoning our whole B-29 strategy in the Pacific

Kane I don't think we're justified in making a third attack tomorrow

Dennis Sir! Concentration is the crux of this! You agreed to that

Garnett Why?

Dennis Weather It may be a month before we can get back to Fendelhorst That's too long

[*Overscene comes the faint, rising roar of the returning bombers All hurry to window*]

Garnett There they come now

Dennis Four . . five eight nine

[*Sound rises and then begins to recede, these planes are passing at a distant tangent*]

Garnett Aren't they going to land here?

Dennis Not this group, they're based about ten miles north [*Peers intently as sound of two more planes passes*]  
ten eleven . I made it eleven

Garnett So did I What's squadron strength here?

[*Sound fades completely*]

Dennis Twelve if it was a squadron

Kane My God! That isn't the remains of a group, is it?

Dennis Can't tell yet, sir

Kane [*scared, nervous*] Find out!  
[DENNIS reacts, checks himself, exits] Cliff,  
what will Washington think?

[*Teletype up and off*]

Garnett Sir, they'll think you're running  
a military bucket shop

Kane I was going to tell them but I  
didn't think Casey would be so impetuous  
At least we are two-thirds done

[BROCKHURST and PRESCOTT enter]

Prescott Sir, Brockie has some ideas I  
think you should hear

[*Muffled ring of telephone in OPS  
room*]

Kane What's your reaction, Brockie?  
Tell us frankly

Brockhurst You want it smooth or  
rough, R. G.?

Kane Well, your honest reaction, Elmer

Brockhurst Your neck's out a foot

Kane My neck ?

Brockhurst Unless you can pass the buck  
to the hemisphere commander You've got  
a hero to court-martial after record  
losses yesterday and probably again today  
You've let security keep this so dark it  
stinks like Pearl Harbor

[*Faint sound of a single bomber high  
overhead*]

After all, the public makes these bombers  
and sends you these kids It's got a right  
to know

[*Teletype up as DENNIS enters*]

Kane Go on, Elmer I want General  
Dennis to hear your reaction

[*Teletype fades*]

Brockhurst He knows it I've warned  
him that the press and public

Dennis Press and public be goddamned!  
Your magazine would crucify us for one  
headline

Brockhurst When did we ever ?

Dennis After Bremfurt We needed a  
second attack to finish there But by the  
time you got done with our losses and  
Washington got done with your insinuations,  
we were told it was politically impossible to  
attack there again *Politically impossible!*  
Today boys were killed with cannon made  
at Bremfurt, since that attack

Brockhurst Dennis, the Air Corps spent  
twenty years begging us to cry wolf at the  
public to get you planes Now you've got  
'em all you give us is phony official state-

ments and alibis about security We were  
asked to help Washington "prepare the  
country" for the news about Bremfurt  
I'm sorry the plan backfired but it wasn't  
entirely our fault

Dennis However it happened, the boys  
are dead

Kane Was that a group or a squadron,  
General?

Dennis Next to last group, sir Some  
stragglers still coming

[*Overscene comes sound of more ap-  
proaching bombers All hurry to win-  
dow*]

This must be Ted's group now

[*Sound builds to heavy volume through  
which closer sounds of individual  
planes with erratic, missing engines  
are audible*]

Eighteen twenty-two twenty-three  
twenty-six

[*Group sound fades a little Individual  
sound of one plane, engines missing  
wildly, rises in direct approach to  
building*]

Kane My God! They look ragged to-  
day

Prescott [*to GARNETT*] They look much  
better in tight formation, sir

Garnett Here's one coming right at us!

Prescott Look, sir! He's got two feath-  
ered props!

Brockhurst And half his tail's shot off  
LOOK OUT!

[*Sound of bomber rises BROCKHURST,  
PRESCOTT and GARNETT throw them-  
selves on floor as plane zooms over  
with terrific crescendo KANE and  
DENNIS remain erect EVANS enters*]

Evans Colonel Martin's group return-  
ing, sir

[*Sound recedes Trio on floor pick  
themselves up*]

Prescott [*to GARNETT*] Sorry, sir  
They're not supposed to buzz the bases

Kane I'll have that pilot tried!

Dennis He isn't buzzing, sir He's in  
trouble

[*All hurry back to window as sound  
rises again in circling approach*]

Good boy, he's lining up to land it!

Garnett Why don't they bail out  
she's only salvage anyway!

Dennis [*furiously*] Can't you see those  
red flares? He's got wounded aboard!

[Sound rises again as plane continues circling approach, toward building now]

Garnett Urgent Virgin! Why, that's Captain Jenks's plane!

Prescott [to KANE, suggestively] You see, sir Captain Jenks's plane is in bad condition

Dennis It's come from Germany in that condition [Peers tensely, sound rises as plane roars past window, motors still missing wildly] Jesus! Look at that wheel [Shouts desperately through window] Pick her up, boy! PICK HER UP!!!

[Sound of plane abates then comes the grinding, crashing sound of a nose-in Silence Then the whole building shakes to a thunderous concussion followed immediately by the sound of siren on meat wagon]

[HALEY enters from OPS room, teletype up as siren fades]

Haley Left main gas tank Total loss, sir

Dennis Can you get the others down here?

Haley I've sent them to the other fields, sir There's plenty of room on most of them now

Dennis What was your count on this gang?

Haley Twenty-eight, sir There may be stragglers

Dennis Did you see Ted's plane?

Haley No, sir It may be landing somewhere else, sir

Dennis Aggregate tomorrow's serviceability as fast as possible

[HALEY exits Teletype off as door closes]

Kane [horrified] Tomorrow! This is worse than yesterday

Dennis They got their target, sir

Evans [blandly] The photographers are waiting outside, General Kane

[KANE looks nonplussed PRESCOTT takes over, severely]

Prescott What photographers?

Evans From Public Relations, sir

Prescott Who ordered them and on what authority?

Evans I did, sir All generals have their pictures taken everywhere they go They say it helps the boys' morale

Kane Well, of course, if it helps morale We'll go along, General probably

drop in on some of your group interrogations

Dennis [reaching for cap] Very well, sir

Kane No, no I wouldn't think of taking you away from here now

Garnett Casey, I'll have more to say to you about this later

Kane Casey, you will not order tomorrow's mission until I get back

[DENNIS salutes EVANS holds door and then follows as KANE, PRESCOTT and GARNETT exeunt DENNIS speaks off to OPS room, voice wracked with fear and nervousness]

Dennis Haley, haven't you anything on Ted yet?

Haley's Voice [off] Nothing yet, sir

[DENNIS walks distractedly about the room, gathers himself as EVANS enters]

Dennis You're going to wisecrack yourself right into the infantry

Evans Sir, we never would have got rid of 'em without photographers

Dennis They're coming back Alert the cook

Evans Sir, maybe if I was to speak to the cook

Dennis None of that! We'll have to give 'em a good dinner [EVANS exits DENNIS circles the room distractedly again, then slumps wearily against desk as COLONEL TED MARTIN enters MARTIN is vigorous, skeptical, in mid-thirties Looks exhausted but exudes great vitality Face is smoke stained and clothes are conspicuously drenched with dried blood DENNIS can hardly speak to him at first] Ted you all right?

Martin Not a scratch

Dennis What's that blood?

Martin My radio man

Dennis Bad?

Martin Dead

Dennis Oh Anyone else?

Martin Not in our plane Got a drink?

Dennis Sure Aren't they serving combat ration to the crews?

Martin Yeah but I wanted to see you quick [DENNIS extends bottle from desk MARTIN drinks deeply, continues drinking through scene] Ummm that's better

Dennis What happened?

Martin Twenty millimeter shell, right on the radio panel Ummmm, I'm getting old They should have had this war ten years ago

Dennis How do you think I feel?  
 Martin [contrite, covering] Sorry, Grandpa  
 Dennis Tell me about it Was it rough all the way?  
 Martin No It was a milk run for thirty-four minutes after our fighters had to turn back Then the whole damned Luftwaffe jumped us . [Grins, drin's]  
 Those boys must have a new directive, too From then back to our fighters we shot our guns hot  
 Dennis When did you get yours?  
 Martin Just after I radioed you the strike signal What about the rest?  
 Dennis Looks like forty-two with two down in the channel, so far  
 Martin I was afraid of that, from what I saw  
 Dennis Did you catch fire?  
 Martin Yes We were having it hot and heavy so I stayed on the nose gun and Goldberg went back and put it out He should get something for that, Casey One of our waist gunners took one look at that fire and went right out through the bomb-bay  
 Dennis Goldberg can have whatever you recommend  
 Martin I'll think it over Then after things quieted down we tried a tourniquet on the kid, but it was too late [Shakes head, drin's] Didn't I just see Old Percent and Cliff Garnett in a car?  
 Dennis Yeah The joint's full of big wheels today  
 Martin Did Cliff bring any news from Helen?  
 Dennis Letters There's no cable I've been checking  
 Martin Casey, did they send Cliff over to stop Operation Stitch?  
 Dennis No Kane hasn't even told Washington about it  
 Martin Then what's Cliff doing here?  
 Dennis Warning us that Washington is nervous  
 Martin They didn't have to send him for that  
 Dennis The big wheels are having a global re-allocation meeting, Tuesday  
 Martin Has Cliff re-allocated himself your job?  
 Dennis I think Cliff's got his eye on one

of those B-29 commands in the Pacific They start with two stars

[EVANS enters]

Evans Glad to see you back, Colonel  
 Martin Sir, where do you want General Garnett's footlocker and bedroll?

Martin General Garnett's footlocker and bedroll . so, he is moving in?

Evans They just arrived, sir

Dennis Number one guest hut, Sergeant

[EVANS exits MARTIN rises, massages Dennis's shoulder blades with palm]

Well the handle doesn't stick out anyway, Casey

Dennis Ted, I don't envy you Cliff for a brother-in-law but he's an able staff officer

Martin Clifton has flown some of the hottest desks in Washington

Dennis We needed those guys to get planes for hoodlums like you and me

Martin Casey, no record after this war will be worth a damn without command in it Cliff knows this is still the best command in the Air Force Any brigadier alive would give his next star for your job

Dennis When I finish Operation Stitch they can have it for corporal's stripes Thank God we're two thirds done

Martin Casey, that's the hell of it, we aren't

Dennis Ted! Are you sure you're all right?

Martin Yeah I'm all right

Dennis You're tired You did Posenleben yesterday and Schweinhafen today

Martin [forcing the words] We didn't touch Schweinhafen today

Dennis [stretchedly] What? You signalled me

Martin Mistake. Before I could correct it the radio man was dead We plastered some goddamned place that looked exactly like it, forty miles from Schweinhafen

Dennis Are you sure?

Martin Positive

Dennis How did it happen?

Martin Sighting mistake It was my fault, Casey When we came on our bombing run there sat a little town that looked more like Schweinhafen than Schweinhafen does, same confluence of rivers, railroad and highways, same cathedral a mile to the left, same phony road on the roof camouflage you'll see it yourself in the strike pictures I was still on the nose gun but I

switched with Goldberg long enough for a look through the bombsight myself We were both sure of it and Goldberg threw the whole load right down the chimney The others salvoed into our smoke

*Dennis* How do you know it wasn't Schweinhafen? Sure you weren't turned around?

*Martin* I swung east to make sure There was Schweinhafen with its maiden-head still showing Did you tell Kane we'd hit it?

*Dennis* Yes What do you think you did hit?

*Martin* I don't know Goldberg's checking maps and photos and target folders now Whatever it was came apart like a powder mill Did you get any sleep, Casey?

*Dennis* [evasively] Of course Tell me

*Martin* How much?

*Dennis* About about three hours

*Martin* You promised me you'd get five

*Dennis* I had work to do

*Martin* Casey, if you don't take better care of yourself someone else will be doing this work anyway

*Dennis* Maybe this will give us both a rest

*Martin* Forty-four bombers for the wrong target Why don't you castrate me?

*Dennis* Quit hurting You've had this coming, Ted It's averages

*Martin* What will this do to Operation Stitch?

*Dennis* Set us back one day We'll do Schweinhafen again tomorrow and Fendelhorst Monday I'm pretty sure the weather will hold

*Martin* Will Kane . with global re-allocation coming up Tuesday?

*Dennis* He'll have to

*Martin* Casey, he had cold feet before we started

*Dennis* He's our chief, Ted

*Martin* And a good soldier is loyal to his chief, it says so in the book But what kind of loyalty is that to fallible men above him, half the time dopes and cowards? What about loyalty to common sense

and to the guys who have to do things that aren't in the book . like Stitch?

*Dennis* At least he didn't forbid it, Ted

*Martin* Did he authorize it? Did he endorse your report and go on record like a

man? Not Kane You're the goat on this one

*Dennis* Other guys have been killed If I get canned

*Martin* If you get canned, it's the end of honest bombardment here

*Dennis* We've got to tell him, Ted

*Martin* [with passion] You *can't* tell him, Casey! What about the guys we've already lost? If Kane quits now, they're wasted We either finish now or we might as well take precision bombardment back to Arizona It's us, or the Germans, this week, boy, and you're the only commander in this hemisphere with guts enough to see it through

*Dennis* Which of us is going to tell Kane that?

*Martin* I'll guarantee Kane won't be able to tell today's strike photos from Schweinhafen Tomorrow we'll knock off Fendelhorst Monday, when he orders his usual month-end milk run to the French Channel ports, we'll go back and clean up Schweinhafen

[HALEY enters]

*Haley* Fifty-third Wing reports both of today's reconnaissance planes now *two* hours overdue, sir

[DENNIS nods HALEY exits]

*Martin* Today it's reconnaissance planes! Six weeks from now it'll be whole divisions of bombers, unless we finish the job

*Dennis* We'll finish, Ted We'll make him finish!

*Martin* [aghast] Casey, you and I know what Operation Stitch means How can you tell Kane?

*Dennis* He's our chief, Ted He's in command

## ACT TWO

### SCENE ONE

*About ten o'clock that night*

*Stage is as before at rise EVANS is discovered in a posture of slovenly relaxation in Dennis's chair HALEY enters to make a change on status board*

*Haley* Where have you been, for five hours?

*Evans* Sir, there were two of them women, both unhappy

*Haley* Only two? That wouldn't have bothered me at your age

*Evans* Well, sir, I hope it doesn't bother me, at your age

[*HALEY gapes, then both jump to attention as DENNIS enters*]

*Dennis* Where's the twenty-two hundred weather map for tomorrow?

*Haley* They asked us to hold it, pending further developments, sir

*Dennis* Bad developments?

*Haley* They didn't say so, sir, they promised them soon

*Dennis* Bring it as fast as you get it. What about status?

*Haley* I think I can promise four full groups for tomorrow, sir

*Dennis* That's including last mission crews?

*Haley* Yes, sir. We're scraping bottom at that

[*DENNIS nods, reluctantly* *Sees EVANS, covers a grin*]

*Dennis* How did you make out, Sergeant?

*Evans* Mission accomplished, sir

*Haley* [with relish] Not quite, sir. Mrs Magruder telephoned again. Now she wants Sergeant Evans billeted in her house for protection

*Evans* [horrified] What? Look here, sir

*Dennis* [amused, dead pan] Sergeant, we've got to get ten more missions out of this navigator

*Evans* Sir, my oath was to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States

*Dennis* The United States needs navigators, Sergeant

*Evans* Sir, I wouldn't do this to an admiral

*Dennis* We haven't got an admiral handy

*Haley* [reluctantly] Sir, there's one more point that navigator was killed on the mission today

*Dennis* [wearily, heavily] Oh. Have his effects examined, before they're sent home

*Haley* It's being done, sir

*Evans* Sir, in the circumstances, may I return to military duty?

*Dennis* Yes

[*EVANS starts out, turns back, solicitously*]

*Evans* Excuse me, General, but have you had your chow, yet?

*Dennis* I'm still expecting General Kane for dinner

*Evans* He'd be pretty stringy, sir. I'll get you something [Exits]

*Haley* General, the group commanders are sweating for tomorrow's order

*Dennis* I can't send it till I find General Kane

*Haley* They need all the time we can give 'em, sir. Most of our ground crews haven't had their clothes off for three days

*Dennis* Neither has anyone else except Sergeant Evans [Thinks, eyes watch] Cut a Field Order Tape using the data for Operation Stitch, Phase Two

*Haley* Phase Two sir?

*Dennis* That's what I said

*Haley* Yes, sir

[Starts for door, smouldering *DENNIS checks him*]

*Dennis* Ernie! I'm sorry. I'm tired

*Haley* Roger, sir. You ought to get some sleep, Casey

[Exits *DENNIS slumps on desk, exhausted, face down. Almost sleeps. Then stirs quickly as MARTIN enters carrying pictures*]

*Martin* Sorry, Casey. Why don't you hit that sack for an hour?

*Dennis* [stirring] You aren't pretty enough for a nurse

*Martin* Have you found Percent yet?

*Dennis* Not a trace. I've phoned everywhere

*Martin* He must be looking for another photographer

*Dennis* Are these today's strikes?

*Martin* All we got. There won't be any reconnaissance, thank God

[They eye each other, then scrutinize the pictures together]

*Dennis* This is the one from your plane?

*Martin* Yeah. Just as we bombed. And this was from our last plane. Look what Goldberg did to it

*Dennis* God! It's uncanny, these pictures would fool an expert

*Martin* [deliberately] They'd better

*Dennis* Why?

*Martin* If you report this mistake to Kane, before that Tuesday meeting, you're just giving your job to Cliff

*Dennis* I'd like to think so



*Martin* [indicating cross] And you're giving Goering those Do you like to think that?

*Dennis* No

*Martin* These pictures will keep Kane happy for twenty-four hours He doesn't know a strike photo from a gonorrhoea smear Why do you have to tell him tonight?

*Dennis* Why did you tell me?

*Martin* I could trust you

*Dennis* [simply] He trusts us

[*They're deadlocked as KANE, GARNETT, PRESCOTT and BROCKHURST enter MARTIN conceals the pictures*]

*Kane* Forgive us, Casey We've had dinner

*Garnett* Ted, old man! I want a good talk with you! How are you?

*Martin* Still kicking

*Kane* Ted, I'm sorry you had such a rough day, today, but when you're leading the Division, I never worry about the target

*Dennis* Sir, my group commanders have got to have tomorrow's field order

*Kane* That's something we have to discuss, Casey Cliff, will you explain?

*Garnett* Casey, you may think I've rattled on you but I felt our people had to know what's going on I persuaded General Kane to let me telephone the Air Board in Washington

*Dennis* What did they say?

*Garnett* Unfortunately, most of 'em are in Florida at the proving grounds

*Dennis* Testing a new typewriter?

*Kane* Casey, I cannot tolerate this attitude Our public relations policy has put us where we are today

*Dennis* It sure has

*Brockhurst* Dennis, a free democracy cannot ignore public opinion

*Dennis* Let's take that up when it's free again

*Brockhurst*. What?

*Dennis* The problem now is survival, Mr Brockhurst [*EVANS enters with sandwiches*] They've eaten, Sergeant

*Evans* Do they know you haven't, sir?

*Kane* I'm sorry, Casey Put them down, Sergeant We're going soon

*Evans* That's fine, sir

[*Unloads tray, dead pan*]

*Garnett* But I did have a very constructive talk with Lester Blackmer Lester was

shocked but I think I sold him on persuading the Board to let you finish Operation Stitch after Tuesday

*Dennis* [*furiously—to KANE*] Sir! Did you let that little two-star stooge forbid us

*Kane* Certainly not! The Chief prides himself on never letting his personal staff interfere with his field commanders!

*Garnett* Casey, if you'll play ball now, everything will be fine, after Tuesday

*Dennis* Including the weather in Washington?

*Garnett* You'll get weather again

*Dennis* When after they've got jets? I've waited five weeks for this weather Twice we had one good day This takes three in succession If we ever got 'em again the big wheels would be after us for headline bombing Submarine pens! Or covering some State Department four-flush in the Balkans

*Garnett* Nobody can take the politics out of war But I made Lester agree that since you are two thirds done

[*LT JAKE GOLDBERG enters, with strike photographs GOLDBERG is tough of speech, gentle of manner Like many good bombardiers he is essentially scholarly Momentarily he is too pre-occupied to notice the visitors*]

*Goldberg* I've found the damned thing

Oh excuse me, sir You said when I found it

*Dennis* That's right, come in General Kane, today's lead bombardier, Lieutenant Goldberg

*Kane* Lieutenant, a member of the Big Chief's advisory council in Washington just told me on the phone that the Chief will be very proud of your mission today

[*GOLDBERG looks bored but MARTIN is sweating bullets, tries to pull him out*]

*Martin* Sorry, sir

[*But KANE has grabbed the pictures*]

*Kane* Look, Cliff! Look! Here's the highway coming in, here's the river here's the factory .

*Goldberg* You've got them upside down, sir

*Dennis* General Kane, I'd like a minute alone with you, sir

*Kane* Of course, Casey My God! Look at that destruction, Cliff! These will have to go to Washington by special plane

*Prescott* Sir! I'd like to frame these,

dramatically, on good white board, with a title . . . The Doom of Schweinhafen!

Kane Yes! The very thing, Homer!

Goldberg It isn't Schweinhafen, sir

Kane Not Schweinhafen? What are they?

Goldberg The Nautilus torpedo factory, at Gritzenheim, sir

Garnett Torpedo factory! General! This is very opportune! Half the United Chiefs are admirals! If we get these to that meeting

Kane I'll send my own plane! [*Claps GOLDBERG on the shoulder*] You don't know what you've done for us, boy! Showing them that in the midst of the greatest air campaign in history we still think enough of the larger picture to knock out a torpedo factory too

Dennis I'm sorry, sir It wasn't too It was instead

Kane Instead! You let me tell Washington you'd destroyed Schweinhafen!

Dennis It was a mistake We hit this Nautilus place

Kane Whose mistake?

Dennis Mine, sir The briefing . . .

Martin The briefing was perfect I led the Division and I loused it up

Goldberg These gentlemen are covering for me, sir I was well briefed and I was on the bombsight I got mixed up in the fighting

[*KANE is confused, but his chagrin has found a focal point*]

Kane Why did you get mixed up were you scared?

Goldberg Yes, sir I'm always scared But today

Kane Casey, what are you thinking of—entrusting a mission of this importance to a man who admits he's . . .

Dennis [*furiously*] Sir, I should like to explain to you

Goldberg [*to DENNIS*] It's all right, sir General Kane doesn't understand

Kane Do you understand what I'd be justified in doing?

Goldberg You ought to shoot me for wasting four hundred and forty guys this afternoon I'd be grateful if you did

[*Turns and exits without saluting*]

Dennis Sir! Lieutenant Goldberg is on the fourth mission of a voluntary second tour of duty over German targets only

Brockhurst I think I'd take it easy on that one, R G

[*Too late, KANE is stricken with contrition MARTIN pours it on him with repressed fury*]

Martin Sir, that boy isn't our Division bombardier by accident He knows there's a German order waiting for him by name, and serial number He knew it when he volunteered for a second tour Today he hit what we both thought was the target perfectly I've just written him up for a cluster on his Silver Star

Kane Send the citation to me personally

Martin [*sincerely*] Thank you, sir

Kane Ted, how many men in the Division know this mistake?

Martin Most of 'em were too busy fighting to care where we were

Kane In any case you might have had a recall or change of target signal en route mightn't you?

Martin I might have

Kane Cliff, do you think it's fair to the service to report this mistake immediately?

Garnett I'd have to think about that, sir

Kane We reported the strike in good faith Now, with two more days on naval targets, under fighter cover, we can average down losses, set sortie and tonnage records and put the Navy under obligation to us just before that meeting

Dennis And that would be the end of Operation Stitch

Kane Casey, let's you and I take these pictures to your light table

[*They start out PRESCOTT stops them*]

Prescott Sir Would you ask Brockie here to help me with the wording of the picture captions? They must be right

Brockhurst I'm not as interested in wordings as I was, R G

Kane We need help, Brockie just as you sometimes need help . . . with the censors

[*BROCKHURST starts, hesitates, then follows the beaming PRESCOTT out through ante-room door KANE and DENNIS exeunt into OPS room EVANS exits*]

Martin Well, Clifton, do you find travel broadening?

Garnett Ted, how long has Casey been like this?

Martin Lake what?

*Garnett* So strung up so tense  
*Martin* Were you sent here to replace him?

*Garnett* I don't think so

*Martin* What does Kane think?

*Garnett* He asked me, confidentially, if I'd been sent to replace him

*Martin* Jesus! You haven't done anything bad enough to be a *major* general, have you?

*Garnett* Same old rebel, aren't you, Ted? Listen, old man, Helen is worried about your flying missions

*Martin* My insurance is paid up

*Garnett* Good God, man! I don't mean that But you know how she is

*Martin* I should Look, Cliff, neither of us is going to change much Let's drop it

*Garnett* But you've got the kid to think of now

*Martin* That's the point This isn't like the old barnstorming and testing Nobody gets a kick out of this

*Garnett* Exactly

*Martin* But if Goldberg can fly missions for my kid, so can I

*Garnett* But Ted, you can do so much more, with your experience

*Martin* What?

*Garnett* I've been fighting for bombardment in my own way Now I think the United Chiefs are going to give me a B-29 command in the Pacific to make me prove what I've been saying

*Martin* Aren't those B-29s still a long way off?

*Garnett* No They're coming faster than anyone realizes Those jobs will be assigned very soon

*Martin* So with a B-29 command you will get two stars?

*Garnett* And a lot of headaches

*Martin* Cliff, this is not conference fighting Can you run an operational command?

*Garnett* Joe Lucas did—until he got killed Casey's doing it And I'm going to have something they never had

*Martin* What?

*Garnett* Brigadier General Ted Martin—for my chief of staff

*Martin* Me, a chief of staff with all those papers?

*Garnett* Adjutants do that But I need the Air Corps needs your operating ex-

perience out there Incidentally, I'll be able to make you a brigadier, immediately

[*MARTIN ponders deeply while GARNETT eyes him tensely*]

*Martin* Cliff, did Casey cook this up with you to ground me gently after today?

*Garnett* Good Lord, no! He doesn't even know this

*Martin* Then he isn't trying to get rid of me?

*Garnett* He'd rather cut his arm off But he'll understand that the service needs you there and it's your chance to make brigadier Casey isn't selfish

*Martin* If you put it to him that way, he'd make me go

*Garnett* We'll be a perfect team I'll fight the Navy and you can fight the Japs

*Martin* And Helen makes brigadier's wife It's very neat, Cliff

*Garnett* Damn it, Ted, that war's just as much for your kid as this one Why should you throw yourself away here when by waiting

*Martin* The Germans aren't waiting

*Garnett* Look, if you'd rather we both ask Casey

*Martin* No you don't If you say a word to Casey before I think this over, the deal's off

*Garnett* All right, but think with your head Those B-29s can save an invasion against Japan They can save bloody beachheads and five years of guerrilla warfare They've got to have the best we've got, Ted

*Martin* What else does Helen want?

*Garnett* She wants you to suggest a godfather for the kid Naturally we've talked about it but she wants your views

*Martin* Who does she want me to view?

*Garnett* Well, R G Kane is going to be a big name

[*KANE and DENNIS enter*]

*Kane* No man alive could tell these pictures from Schweinhafen [*Pauses—eyes GARNETT*] Cliff—do the United Chiefs actually study strike photos?

*Garnett* [*shocked—evasive*] Well, sir, of course they're not trained photo interpreters themselves, but

[*PRESCOTT and BROCKHURST enter*  
*BROCKHURST is now troubled by what*

*he's seen and heard but PRESCOTT wears the happy flush of creative endeavor!*

*Prescott* Sir I got some draughtsmen to make three by five mountings for the panels before and after pictures on good white board with glossy black lettering the first title will be "Doom of an Axis Torpedo Factory"

*Dennis* Jesus H Christ!

*Kane* General!

*Brockhurst* [respectfully] General, I want to get this straight Isn't a torpedo factory a worth-while target?

*Dennis* The last one would be The Germans wouldn't miss the first ten

*Brockhurst* But you have to make a start, on anything worth while

*Dennis* Fighting submarines by heavy bombardment is not worth while

*Brockhurst* The Navy thinks it is And most people agree

*Dennis* Most people always think you can get something for nothing, Mr Brockhurst We're the only force available to strike the Germans in Germany To wipe out submarines by bombing would cost us every good weather day for a year

*Brockhurst* Then why don't the United Chiefs straighten this mess out?

*Garnett* The United Chiefs are half admirals We have to make some concessions to inter-service cooperation

*Dennis* Did you get my memorandum to the Anointed Chiefs on that?

*Kane* I didn't send it up, Casey It was too provocative

*Dennis* I offered the Navy a fair trade I wrote them I'd bomb any naval target in Germany the day after they took those battleships in and shelled the fighter plane factory at Bremen

*Brockhurst* Can I use that?

*Kane* God, no! Half the United Chiefs are admirals, Brockie

*Brockhurst* Where did I get the idea this war was against the Axis?

*Dennis* General Kane, may I send tomorrow's field order?

*Kane* Casey, I can't lose another forty planes over Schweinhafen the day after I've told them I've destroyed it

*Dennis* Sir, you can release the Division to my discretion

*Kane* Whichever of us got hung, we'd still be sabotaging the Chief

*Dennis* Would you rather sabotage bombardment, sir?

*Kane* Casey, I've spent twenty years working for bombardment The Chief's spent twenty-five You kids don't know how we've fought

*Martin* No?

*Kane* No! You're giving your youth We've already given ours I was twelve years a captain, the Chief was fourteen We took Billy Mitchell's side when it meant Siberia They sent us to a Cavalry School I was the second best pilot in America and they assigned me to keeping records of manure disposal But we never gave up, we never quit trying We wrote anything we could get printed, we got down on our knees to Hollywood charlatans for pictures, we did those publicity stunts to educate the public and we kept our own fund for the widows We tested without parachutes, we flew the mail through solid glue in obsolete training planes The year Herman Goering dominated the Munich conference our appropriation wasn't as big as the New York City Public Safety Budget and we bought a lot of Congressmen liquor, out of our own pockets, to get it

*Brockhurst* General, why didn't you tell this story?

*Kane* And spell it all out for the Germans? Not that they didn't know and count on it but you don't tell stories in uniform We were promised fifty thousand planes and our boys were never going to fight in foreign wars so the country went back to sleep and we were called back from stables and rifle ranges to make a modern air force out of promises and what was left over after they gave our planes and instructors to every goddamned ambassador in Washington

*Brockhurst* We were told that was to get experience

*Kane* There wasn't any experience of daylight precision bombardment Both the Germans and British had tried it and said it couldn't be done The Chief said it could

But we'd just begun to get the tools to get started when we were in it ourselves with a double war and a fifty thousand plane paper air force that didn't add up to fifty serviceable bombers

[Turns to DENNIS defensively] Casey, if we'd had in nineteen-forty-one the planes you've lost this week we would have had a

Munich with the Japs that would have made Hitler's Munich look like International Rotary!

*Dennis* Sir, we've all fought, all our lives, to get an Air Force Now we've got to protect our beginnings

*Kane* From what?

*Dennis* [indicating cross] Those

*Kane* Those things? They're just our acknowledged enemies They fight us in the open Do you remember the fight to get our first experimental Fortress? Do you realize how much the Navy wants our planes, for sub-patrol and to protect the repairing of those battleships that air power couldn't hurt? Do you know how much the Army wants our pilots for company commanders? Don't you know the British want us to switch to night area bombardment? Do you know there's a plan to fly infantry supplies into China with bombers? Do you know what it means that the United Chiefs are half admirals and the Consolidated Chiefs half British? Don't you realize the fight its taken for Cliff and the others to get us any planes at all?

*Garnett* He's right, Casey Washington's at the crossroads on us

*Kane* On Tuesday every one of those factions will be at that meeting with its own pet plan for winning the war by naval blockade, or attrition by defensive, or a good sound saber charge And you want us to send the Chief in there with three days of prohibitive losses hanging over our theory

*Dennis* Damn it, sir! It's not a theory Ted demolished Posenleben

*Kane* And with time and planes and support we can do the same to every factory in Europe But the decision is at stake now It isn't just a few losses this week, or even a lot in six months The Germans are going to kill more of our people, of course But they won't be any deader than all the ones who've been killed through the last thirty years to get us air power

You can worry about Germany and you should But I'm fighting the Ground Forces and the Navy and the Congress and the White House and the people and the press and our Allies

You think I don't know the boys call me Old Percent? You think I've enjoyed spreading this mug of mine around the press like a pregnant heiress? You think I don't

know what they could do to me for the statistics I've juggled, the strike photos I've doctored, the reports I've gilded, or suppressed I know and I'd do it all again! I've spent twenty years watching my friends killed and broken and disgraced and discarded for one single idea to get our goddamned country air power! [Breaks off, muses, resumes heavily] Ted, how did the Germans fight today?

*Martin* Rough, sir

*Kane* No sign the second day in succession hurts them, too?

*Martin* None we could see, sir

*Kane* What do you think they'll be able to do tomorrow?

*Martin* They'll fight, sir They don't stand short on guts over there

*Dennis* Today's intelligence summary's done, sir

*Kane* Is your intelligence officer any good?

*Dennis* He's what we have He's honest and has sense

*Kane* What is he, a synthetic?

*Dennis* Retread, sir Artilleryman last time, insurance broker since

*Kane* Probably a good husband and father, too Well, get him

*Dennis* [into phone] Ask Major Lansing to step in at once

[Goes to door, greets him MAJOR DESMOND LANSING enters He is grey haired, self-possessed, wears good last war ribbons]

*Lansing* Major Lansing reporting as ordered, sir

*Dennis* General Kane, my Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Major Lansing

*Kane* What will the Germans do tomorrow, Major?

*Lansing* That depends upon where we go, sir

*Kane* If we go back to Schweinhafen

*Lansing* They'll order maximum effort as soon as we cross the tenth meridian east, sir

[Indicates tenth meridian east on map]

*Kane* How many will they have serviceable?

*Lansing* Enough for a hard fight, sir

*Kane* But we've claimed over a hundred and eighty in the last two days

*Lansing* I'm aware of that, sir

*Kane* You don't believe our claims?

*Lansing* No, sir

*Kane* Then why do you report them?

*Lansing* Orders from your headquarters, sir

*Kane* Oh Well, you understand that's necessary for the boys' morale. What do you think of Operation Statch?

*Lansing* It's imperative, sir. We're losing forty-odd bombers to conventional fighters for every worth-while mission now. If they get a hundred jets we'll lose a hundred and forty at a time.

*Kane* Do you think the Germans know what we're up to?

*Lansing* There's no information on that, sir

*Kane* What would you guess?

*Lansing* That they don't, sir

*Kane* Why?

*Lansing* The Germans don't like to give their superiors bad news, sir

*Brockhurst* You shock me, Major

*Kane* How can they help reporting what's happened?

*Lansing* Their information has to go up through channels, too, sir

*Garnett* Is that a sarcasm, Major?

*Lansing* It's a fact, sir. Deutschland-sender just announced they'd destroyed a hundred and sixty of our bombers today, sir

*Brockhurst* Doubtless for the German boys' morale

*Kane* Major, do you mean to say that if the Germans guessed the truth about Operation Statch they wouldn't face it among themselves?

*Lansing* That would depend on who did the guessing and who did the facing, sir

*Kane* You evidently don't think much of their High Command

*Lansing* That's a personal opinion, sir

*Garnett* I'd like to know how you form it, Major

*Lansing* My observation, sir, is that most soldiers and particularly air men are afflicted with Narcissism. They don't think about their enemies, they think about themselves because their mechanical problems take up all their time. The consequence is that when they've procured their planes and trained their people and learned their tactics, they have to ask amateurs, like me, what to do with them. When the results are bad they fire the amateurs and make the commanders field marshals

*Garnett* [Indignantly] We don't have field marshals!

*Lansing* [evenly]. I happened to be thinking of Goering, sir. The battles of Britain and Malta could have been decisive. But Goering lost his nerve over the early losses and diffused his effort. By the time the truth came out the German Air Force had lost not only its offensive power but its freedom of operation. They will be judging us by their own experience.

*Kane* What do you mean by that?

*Lansing* The Germans never settled on one decisive target system and paid the price for it. They know that every time we've had bad losses we've switched to easy targets for a while.

*Kane* If we hit Schweinhafen tomorrow, will the Germans tumble?

*Lansing* You're still asking me to guess, sir. I should guess that after two jet factories in quick succession they would face the truth.

*Kane* And concentrate every fighter they have in defense of Fendelhorst on Monday?

*Lansing* We'd have to expect it, sir

*Kane* And even so, you think it's worth doing?

*Lansing* If you wish to continue precision bombardment, sir

*Kane* Thank you, Major

[LANSING salutes and exits]

*Garnett* That's a very independent major you keep, Casey

*Kane* Of course, he's really only a civilian

[HALEY enters, addresses DENNIS]

*Haley* There's a weather report you should hear at once, sir

[MAJOR BELDING DAVIS, the Division weather officer, enters. HALEY exits]

*Dennis* Come in, Major, General Kane, my Division weather officer, Major Davis. Go right ahead, Davis. What is it?

*Davis* Special flash from Iceland, sir. Just preliminary but a very interesting cold mass is forming eccentrically.

*Dennis* Never mind the genealogy, what will it do?

*Davis* Blanket the continent, if it matures as we expect, sir

*Dennis* When?

*Davis* On present indications late Monday afternoon, sir

*Dennis* When will it close my bases here?

*Davis* Best estimate now is about fifteen hundred Monday, sir

*Dennis* I always said God must love Will Messerschmidt!

*Davis* We'll have more for the midnight weather map, sir

*Dennis* Bring it as you get it [DAVIS exits DENNIS turns to KANE] There goes our season's weather, sir We'll make it these next two days or bite our nails off to the elbow

*Garnett* Casey, we can't afford two more days of heavy losses now . just for a theory

*Dennis* It's not a theory! Doesn't Washington understand our losses? Do you think the Germans would fight like this if they weren't scared of our bombardment?

*Kane* Homer, make a note of that, for Washington

[PRESCOTT whips out notebook, writes]

*Dennis* Cliff, we're doing what no one in this war has been able to do yet We're making the German Air Force fight, on our initiative over Germany, where it doesn't dare to refuse combat in order to rest and rebuild And we're tearing it up over Germany! The German Air Force has been the balance of power in this world, ever since Munich It took the German Army everywhere they've been It beat the Polish Air Force in three days and the Norwegian in three hours it forced the Maginot Line and beat the French in three weeks

*Kane* Homer, get this

*Dennis* The Royal Air Force did win a brilliant battle from it, over England It was a defensive battle, the kind we're making Germany fight now Even after that the German Air Force was good enough to knock off Yugoslavia and Greece for practice, to capture Crete and dominate the Mediterranean, to chase the Russians back to Moscow and Stalingrad, to blockade the North Cape and very nearly cut the Atlantic lifeline to England They would have done it if their High Command had backed them up with a few more planes Now we've made them switch from bomber production to manufacturing jet fighters We've made them pull whole groups off the Russians and away from Rommel and put them over there across the Channel, facing

us Our own people in the Mediterranean are advancing under aerial supremacy

*Kane* Homer, get every word of this

*Dennis* Well, get this too, Homer! The Germans know this better than we do But they're retreating from their costliest conquests and they've broken the balance of their whole air force for just one thing They know that fighters, Hurricanes and Spits, saved England from either decisive bombardment or invasion They're developing these jets to make Europe as impregnable as the British made England And they're going to do it, just as surely as we sit here with our fingers in our asses and let them!

*Prescott* Do you want that in, too, sir?

*Kane* Not exactly that Don't take any more Casey, I agree with you entirely but we've got to wait

*Dennis* Sirs, wars are lost by waiting The Allies waited at Munich The French and British waited, behind the Maginot Line The Germans waited, to invade England The Russians waited, until they had to fight without an Allied army in the field We waited, for a little more strength, to coerce Japan

Now, we're forcing the fighting But if we wait for the cycle to swing again, we'll be waiting for the Germans to put a roof on the continent, to neutralize the Russians and then to confront our armies on D-Day at the Channel with an air force that's already whipped us I'm not trying to tell you that Operation Stitch will win the war But no battle, anywhere in this war, has been won without aerial supremacy Operation Stitch is the price of that

*Kane* Will you gentlemen wait in the ante-room?

[Others exit GARNETT hesitates]

*Garnett* Did you mean me, too, sir?

*Kane* I should like to be alone with General Dennis [GARNETT exits, stuffily] Casey, you must think me incapable of decision

*Dennis* Sir, are there factors—on your level—that I don't know?

*Kane* Nothing military

*Dennis* Well, then, sir

*Kane* But if Washington screams for blood—I'd have to throw you to the wolves

*Dennis* I understand that, sir

*Kane* If I have to jettison you, we lose our best brigadier



Dennis Thank you, sir But we're all expendable

Kane If they have to jettison me, we probably lose bombardment

Dennis Sir, don't you think—at the top—they expect us to fight?

Kane I hope so, Casey, because I'm releasing the Division to your discretion, with immediate effect

Dennis Thank you, sir

Kane You're fully aware of—what may happen?

Dennis Perfectly, sir

Kane Well, I hope it doesn't Good luck, my boy

[Turns to door EVANS enters with paper]

Evans Top secret relay from Washington for General Kane, sir

[KANE takes it, reads it, crumbles visibly Hands it to DENNIS]

Kane My God! Read it

Dennis [reading] "Impossible contact Air Board yet Urgently implore low losses during critical three days next Representatives Malcolm and Stone of House Military Affairs Committee arriving England this night Imperative their impressions our situation favorable at any price" [Stops reading, eyes KANE, pretends to be thinking aloud] This is an opportune time to be court-martialing a hero, isn't it, sir?

Kane My God! Jenks is from Malcolm's state!

Dennis So he is

Kane We'll have to fix this at once medically

[Indicates phone DENNIS speaks into it]

Dennis Have Major Dayhuff report here immediately [Then to KANE] Sir Jenks is bright He'll understand his nuisance value

Kane We'll make it worth his while to play ball with us

Dennis Are you sure we can, sir?

Kane Bombardment's at stake If necessary we can have Jenks declared insane from combat fatigue

Dennis That's pretty strong, General

Kane In any case I'll have to take back that discretion I've just given you Tomorrow you will bomb the safest naval target you can find to keep these Congressmen happy

Dennis Sir! This is impossible!

Kane Nothing's impossible for the service, Casey

[MAJOR RUFUS DAYHUFF, a poised grey-ing medical reserve officer, enters, saluting smartly]

Dayhuff Major Dayhuff reporting as ordered, sir

Dennis General Kane, my Division Medical Officer, Major Dayhuff

Kane Good evening, Major We have a very serious problem

Dennis Doctor, please tell General Kane exactly what you told me about Captain Jenks

Dayhuff I've been through the case myself, sir I've talked to the flight surgeon in Captain Jenks's group and I've talked to Captain Jenks himself

Kane What is your opinion, Doctor?

Dayhuff There is no medical excuse for Captain Jenks's conduct, sir He acknowledges this and expects no medical exoneration

Kane Mightn't this defiance, in itself, indicate a neurosis or a psychiatric condition

Dayhuff Doctors can be wrong, sir In my opinion Jenks is normal

Kane Have you entered this in his record?

Dayhuff Not yet, sir But I shall

Kane Do you think this is simple cowardice, Major?

Dayhuff No, sir Cowards welcome medical excuses

Kane Have you no idea what's wrong with him?

Dayhuff A personal opinion, sir But it's not a medical matter

Kane Tell me your opinion

Dayhuff This boy has been corrupted by our press and publicity policy, sir Jenks has not done anything exceptional enough for all that attention he got He knew it and he knew that you knew it He knew the Air Corps was not rewarding him, it was exploiting him Most men would have laughed it off, many have But this boy got the idea that he was too valuable to continue combat, too valuable to himself and too valuable to you

Kane And your medical opinion is that he's sane and responsible?

Dayhuff Yes, sir

Kane Thank you, Major [DAYHUFF



*exits*] Ummmm we've got to think of something, Casey

*Dennis* [*thoughtfully*] Sir, any simple lie will clear Jenks. But we need something that won't look too raw to the other crews, we don't want a mutiny.

*Kane* My God, no!

*Dennis* Now sir, Jenks is from Malcolm's state. Suppose he'd had secret orders from his commanding general—that is, me—to hold himself in readiness for special escort duty to these distinguished visitors *then* he would have been justified.

*Kane* Why, Casey. *Casey!* That's perfect. *perfect*, my boy. When I picked you for this job a lot of people thought you were just another overage test pilot! [*Starts for the door*] I'll never forget this, my boy. never!

*Dennis* I'll fix it, sir as soon as I've ordered *Schweinhafen* for tomorrow.

[*KANE turns, faces him aghast*]

*Kane* This is blackmail.

*Dennis* Bombardment's at stake, General.

*Kane* Ingenious, Casey. but I order you to release Captain Jenks to me.

*Dennis* Very well, sir. But I shall file formal charges against him unless you agree to let me finish Operation Statch immediately.

*Kane* Casey, this is preposterous. if you'll just consider.

*Dennis* I have considered, sir.

*Kane* You realize that I might not be able to protect you?

*Dennis* I do, sir.

*Kane* Well, I was going to release the Division to your discretion anyway. if you insist on taking the personal risk.

*Dennis* Thank you, sir [*Speaks into phone*] Guardhouse. *Dennis speaking*, Lieutenant. You will release Captain Jenks to the personal custody of General Kane.

*Kane* In the circumstances, Casey, I'll have to send Washington a correction on today's strike.

*Dennis* I understand that, sir.

*Kane* Well, don't bother to come to the gate.

[*Exits DENNIS slumps from strain, grabs phone, speaks into it*]

*Dennis* Major Davis. what about that Iceland weather. nothing further, eh? Ask Colonel Haley to step in. [*Stares at map until HALEY enters*] Haley, put Op-

eration Statch, Phase Two, *Schweinhafen*, on the printer at once for all groups for tomorrow. Bomb and fuel loadings as before. Routes and timings to follow as soon as we work 'em out.

*Haley* Phase Two, sir? You're certain, sir?

*Dennis* Get it clicking. I'll sign the order in a minute.

[*HALEY exits MARTIN enters, worried*]

*Martin* What the hell have you done now? Percent went out of here burning like a fuse.

*Dennis* Malcolm of Home Military Affairs arrives here tomorrow, Jenks is from Malcolm's state. So I agreed not to court-martial Jenks for Kane's promise to let us finish Statch.

*Martin* Casey, you know Kane will never keep a tough promise.

*Dennis* I can still remember when Kane had guts.

*Martin* You know you're cutting your own throat, don't you?

*Dennis* Maybe. We figured Statch would cost some casualties, Ted.

*Martin* Yeah. we did. I'll bet Kane signals me a recall in the air tomorrow.

*Dennis* Not you, I've alerted Claude Minter to lead them tomorrow.

*Martin* Why?

*Dennis* He's fresh, he's rested, he's coming along fine. Claude's good. he's damned good.

*Martin* I know he's good. He ought to do Fendelhorst Monday.

*Dennis* You've done two of these. I'm tired of sweating you out.

*Martin* Are you sure that's the only reason, Casey?

*Dennis* Yes.

*Martin* You're sure the boys wouldn't have a better chance with someone else up front?

*Dennis* Ted, it's a break for the boys every time you lead them. but it's no fun to sit here and think about it.

*Martin* Well, you get paid the first of every month. and so do I.

*Dennis* Now listen, Ted.

*Martin* *Schweinhafen's mine*, Casey.

[*DENNIS hesitates, picks up phone, speaks into it, heavily*]

*Dennis* [*into phone*] Haley, notify Claude Minter he's on immediate leave, for

twenty-four hours [*Hangs up, eyes MARTIN*] Now you go get some sleep

*Martin* Keep your temper with those Congressmen tomorrow, will you? I don't want to come back here and find you with a Legion of Merit and a ticket home

*Dennis* Don't worry I can still do the office chores around here

[*MARTIN starts for ante-room door, stops*]

*Martin* Casey, Helen wants me to pick a godfather for the kid Will you take it?

*Dennis* What are you trying to do queer him for life?

*Martin* I'm serious

*Dennis* Well, sure

*Martin* And I want you to promise me something

*Dennis* What?

*Martin* If he ever wants to join the Army, you'll take a club and beat his brains right out through his tail

## SCENE TWO

*About noon the next day*

*Curtain rises on the end of a formal presentation for the visiting Congressmen Dennis's office has been made into a miniature theatre with CONGRESSMEN MALCOLM and STONE, PRESCOTT, BROCKHURST and GARNETT for audience They face KANE who has just finished lecturing them from graph and symbol exhibits which EVANS has changed for him Among these "Doom of an Axis Torpedo Factory" is conspicuous KANE is smiling warmly, DENNIS staring stonily at CONGRESSMAN MALCOLM who has claimed the floor*

*Malcolm* Gennel Kane, it's mighty inspirin' foh representatives of the American people, like me an' Misteh Stone, heah, to come oveh onto foreign soil an' fin' the American flag flyin' an' undeh it a fiel' commandeh who is woythy of ouah great nation an' the boys he comman's When we get back to ouah own post of duty in the Congress in Washin'ton, I promise you that ouah great leadehs theah, mos' of whom I am fohtunate enough to count among mah closes' frien's, are goin' to heah fum mah own lips how fohtunate this country is in some of its commandehs

*Kane [straightfaced]* Mr Malcolm, and Mr Stone, you must make the country understand that the credit for what we do

here belongs to the boys Command is merely a trusteeship of our sacred blood Often at night I think on the parable of the talents It must have been a terrible ordeal for those men who were trying to serve their master as best they could, with what they were given But I think the greater lesson is in the humility we learn about the wisdom of the master who knew what he was doing when he tested his subordinates Sometimes I have to pray that our shortages here are only a test through which a Greater Wisdom is measuring our worthiness for a greater service to our people

[*STONE has borne this bravely as befits a veteran of the House but he understands it*]

*Stone* You mean you want more planes, General?

*Kane [with force]* Mr. Stone, if the nation wants aerial supremacy we must have them

*Stone [honestly troubled]* The nation wants aerial supremacy everywhere, General They all tell us the same thing you people over here, the people in the Pacific, the Navy You're getting most of our available replacements now And, frankly, we're appalled at the way you're eating up our boys and bombers here What did you tell us your loss rate is?

*Kane [indicating a discarded chart]* Overall rate of four point eight nine since the beginning of our operations here, sir

*Malcolm* What are losses this week, Gennel?

*Kane* I'll have to tell you that tomorrow, Mr Malcolm, when I've heard from the other Divisions [*Trying to break it off*] And now, gentlemen, if you'd like to inspect the station

*Malcolm* Gennel Kane, the country is pretty upset about the way youah comman' oveh heah is losin' planes an' crews I and Misteh Stone have come oveh on puhpose to look into it Now, suh, what were losses in this Division foh this week?

*Kane* Have you the figures at hand, General?

*Dennis [rising]* Ninety-six, sir

*Malcolm* Ninety-six out of what ove'all stren'th in youah Division?

*Dennis* It varies with the replacement flow, in average it runs between one eighty and two hundred

*Malcolm* So you've lost half youah stren'th in a week?

*Dennis* Eighty-four were lost on two particularly difficult missions

*Malcolm* [silkily] Well ! That means neah about twenty-five percent per mission in this Division as against Gennel Kane's ove'all average of less than five?

*Kane* When these are figured into the general average, Mr Malcolm

*Malcolm* I undehtan' the gennel average, suh! Perhaps Gennel Dennis will explain the discrepancy between his Division an' that

*Dennis* My Division has the only extension tanks for specially distant targets Both of these operations were beyond the gasoline range of friendly fighter cover

*Malcolm* An' the boys lost were deliberately sent beyon' that range?

*Dennis* Yes

*Malcolm* May I ask who ohdehed these operations?

*Dennis* I did

*Malcolm* On youah own authority?

*Dennis* Yes

*Kane* General Dennis was within his technical authority

[MALCOLM is no longer the cheerful clown He talks and acts the experienced prosecutor closing for the kill]

*Malcolm* I undehtan' the technicalities, Gennel Kane No one expec's a man of youah responsibilities to ohdeh every attack foh every Division every night But the fac's appeah to be that the minute youah back was turned, Gennel Dennis took it on his own self to ohdeh these disastrous attacks

*Dennis* They were not disastrous Posenleben was the best bombing of the war to date You saw the pictures As for yesterday

*Kane* [hastily] The Navy has been begging us to destroy the Nautilus Torpedo Plant, gentlemen You saw yourselves Major Prescott's presentation on "The Doom of an Axis Torpedo Factory" That attack was a great piece of inter-service co-operation and a very bright spot in General Dennis's record

*Malcolm* Gennel, I honoh youah loyalty to youah subohdinate but it seems to me that ouah boys are payin' a pretty bloody price foh Gennel Dennis's recohd

*Dennis* They're paying a bloody price for the country's record

*Malcolm* Oh ! So the country's responsible foh youah sendin' 'em beyon' frien'ly fighteh coveh?

*Dennis* Yes

*Malcolm* May I ask how?

*Dennis* How did you vote on the fortification of Guam?

*Malcolm* What?

*Dennis* How did you vote on the fortification of Guam?

*Stonc* [chuckling] By God! He's got you, Arthur

*Malcolm* We'll see who's got who! Gennel Dennis, I want to know why you, puhsonally, are the only single one oveh heah that sen's his Division beyon' fighteh coveh, every time Gennel Kane got his back turned! Every otheh Division consis'en'ly increases sohties an' tonnages of bombs dropped every month The only solitary thing you increase is losses!

*Dennis* Sorties and tonnages are meaningless except on the right targets, Mr Malcolm If you want statistics, the training commands in America fly more sorties than we do except the ones in your state

*Malcolm* What you sayin' about mah state?

*Dennis* That every airfield in it is under a foot of water half the year and twelve thousand feet of fog for nine months But when we asked permission to move to where we could operate efficiently the recommendation was blocked by your committee

*Stonc* General Kane, what are you attacking today?

*Kanc* General Dennis

[DENNIS strips map curtain revealing three tapes, leading to Cherbourg, Emden and Schweinhafen Others throng to map]

*Dennis* It's a three-pronged operation, gentlemen One of our Divisions attacks the Cherbourg sub-pens Another attacks a sub repair yard at Emden My Division, here in the center, is attacking the Focke-Schmidt aircraft factory at Schweinhafen

*Malcolm* Didn't I heah this Division attacked Schweinhafen yestehday?

*Kane* The target was cloud covered, Mr Malcolm, so Colonel Martin very wisely decided to bomb the torpedo factory which he could plainly see, instead

*Prescott* It was a wonderful piece of air generalship Colonel Martin is leading the Division again today

*Malcolm* Is youah Division unde h fighteh coveh today, Gennel?

*Dennis* [at map] To here Another relay will pick them up, here, coming out

*Malcolm* But they'll be on theah own, fum heah to heah, an' back?

*Dennis* Yes

*Malcolm* An' you sent them again on youah own authority?

*Dennis* Yes

*Brockhurst* Gentlemen, I'm fed up I can tell you a hatful about the problems of command!

*Kane* [quickly] Brockie, we all appreciate your interest, but

*Garnett* Mr Malcolm and Mr Stone could be severely criticized in Washington for accepting anything but official military information

[MALCOLM and STONE nod, hooked BROCKHURST subsides, helpless]

*Kane* General Dennis has worked out a very ingenious plan of attack, gentlemen You see, these other Divisions will draw some of the German fighter groups out to the wings and so reduce concentration against Colonel Martin here in the centre

*Stone* Then these other two attacks are timed to prevent concentration against Colonel Martin?

*Kane* Yes

*Stone* Do you expect them to succeed, General Dennis?

*Dennis* Not entirely They may help Colonel Martin a little

*Stone* When do these diversionary attacks bomb their targets?

*Dennis* [eyeing watch] Very soon now

*Stone* And when does Colonel Martin bomb Schweinhafen?

*Dennis* In about fourteen minutes

*Stone* Then unless these diversions do succeed, he's probably fighting right now

*Dennis* Probably

[Awed silence MALCOLM cannot stand the tension]

*Malcolm* Gennel Kane, I'm wahnin' you, if we eveh have anotheh of these muhderous attacks

*Dennis* Our operations are determined by military directive

[HALEY enters]

*Halcy* Plotting room reports the other Divisions are just about to bomb their targets, General

*Kane* Does the radar screen show any reaction from German fighters, Colonel?

*Halcy* None sighted yet, sir

[HALEY exits]

*Malcolm* Then Cunnel Mahtin's got to run the gauntlet of the whole German fighteh force!

*Kane* If you'll come with me, gentlemen

*Prescott* This way, gentlemen

*Kane* We'll have a look at that screen ourselves, down in the radar and signals room [Others start out KANE continues pointedly] General Dennis will wish to remain in his office [As others exeunt, KANE turns frantically back to DENNIS] Casey, for Christ's sake be careful! Malcolm's powerful!

*Dennis* Sir, are you going to let Malcolm break our bargain?

*Kane* I'll keep it if I can

*Dennis* What we're going to do with that Jenks boy would strain a pretty tough stomach

*Kane* It's necessary, Casey, for the service

*Dennis* I only agreed in exchange for your promise to let me finish Operation Stitch tomorrow, in spite of Malcolm

*Kane* By tomorrow Malcolm could have us both in the Quartermaster Corps in Greenland! Is everything arranged as we agreed?

*Dennis* Everything, sir

*Kane* And a good lunch?

*Dennis* Yes, sir

*Kane* And plenty to drink?

*Dennis* Why I hadn't thought of that

*Kane* With Congressmen here ? Start thinking, in double triples!

[KANE exits]

[DENNIS bursts out oblivious of EVANS]

*Dennis* Boozel! It's a wonder he doesn't want opium and slave girls

*Evans* Put 'em on field conditions, sir benzedrine and WACS

*Dennis* Sergeant, is there plenty in the Officers' Bar?

*Evans* Not a drop, sir End of the month Quota's gone

*Dennis* How about the medical officer?

*Evans* He's been dry ever since those Cabinet members were here, sir

*Dennis* God damn democracy!

*Evans* Sir, there are the combat crews' ration stocks

*Dennis* They're running low

*Evans* There's enough for about six missions left, sir

*Dennis* What's the dope on replacements?

*Evans* Quartermaster's doubtful, sir Congress says we're depraving our boys with drink and the stuff's getting short in Washington

*Dennis* These statesmen can go dry for one day Maybe it will kill them

*Evans* Sir, General Kane ordered you

*Dennis* I can't sweat whiskey, can I?

*Evans* Sir, just a few bottles from combat ration stocks

*Dennis* Not a drop! Now get the hell out of here

*Evans* I knew there was a catch to this job

*Dennis* Sergeant, I told you [*DENNIS watches, speechless, while EVANS unlocks the Division Flag Locker and produces two bottles of excellent bourbon*] Where did you get that?

*Evans* Present from an admirer, sir [*Extends a bottle symbolically*] It still is, sir

*Dennis* [*touched, pulling out wallet*] Nonsense! You could get a fortune for this

*Evans* No, sir! I'd like just one thing, sir . . . to shake your hand . . .

[*Extends hand, hesitantly DENNIS shakes warmly but with embarrassment*]

*Dennis* What's this for?

*Evans* Telling that servant of the people what a son of a bitch he is I didn't think you had it in you, sir

*Dennis* Oh well you'd better get some glasses and water [*Then, checking EVANS at door*] Sergeant I appreciate this

*Evans* Well, sir I'd hate breaking in a new general

[*EVANS exits DENNIS calls off*]

*Dennis* Haley! [*HALEY enters*] Are they getting any fighting on those diversions?

*Haley* Not a blip, sir General Kane is pretty scared

*Dennis* Well, he isn't getting shot at Get Davis with the weather

[*GARNETT hurries in, excited HALEY exits*]

*Garnett* Casey, the old man says for God's sake be more discreet He's scared

*Dennis* [*regretfully, pityingly*] A man v'l o's broken altitude records scared of Congressmen

*Garnett* Confidentially, he knows he's pretty close to that third star

*Dennis* I wonder if that's where it sets in Let me know, will you?

*Garnett* You'll be likelier to let me know

*Dennis* Don't kid me Haven't you got one of those B-29 commands sewed up for yourself?

*Garnett* Casey, the Air Corps hasn't got B-29 commands sewed up yet, until the United Chiefs decide whether you've proved precision bombardment over here

*Dennis* When will it be decided?

*Garnett* Ostensibly on Tuesday But those deals are always fixed before the meetings They may be deciding this minute

*Dennis* [*drily*] No wonder you've been jittering, Cliff

*Garnett* Frankly, I'm not as keen for it as I was, since I've seen what command is like

*Dennis* Don't worry, the boys do the work

*Garnett* Casey, it takes more than boys I hate to ask this but I need Ted Martin for my chief of staff out there in the Pacific

[*DENNIS considers this slowly, while GARNETT watches tensely*]

*Dennis* What can you do for him?

*Garnett* Make him a brigadier immediately That command will carry two stars at the top

*Dennis* So it will be Major General  
*Garnett* Congratulations

*Garnett* It isn't final yet But if it does come out that way I will need your help with Ted for the good of the service

*Dennis* How about the good of Ted?

*Garnett* Well, I pointed out to him that he makes brigadier [*Stops, confused*] A word from you will cinch it, Casey

*Dennis* So, he knew about this last night?

*Garnett* Casey, it isn't proselytizing when a guy's your own brother-in-law

[DENNIS looks at his watch and at map]

*Dennis* Cliff! Can't you ever do anything straight?

*Garnett* Casey, if I'd thought for a minute that you would object

*Dennis* Object! Do you think I'd have let him go today if I had known this?

I had Claude Minter alerted to lead this attack And I let Ted talk me into holding Claude over for Fendelhorst tomorrow Of course the bastard didn't tell me about this

*Garnett* I'm very sorry, Casey, but you know yourself you have to handle Ted with kid gloves

*Dennis* [heavily] Don't try to handle him, Cliff, he does that fine

*Garnett* You mean I can have him?

*Dennis* For that job of course

*Garnett* And you'll persuade him?

*Dennis* Yes

*Garnett* Casey, I don't know how to thank you

*Dennis* Save it, I'm not doing it for you

*Garnett* I mean for Ted and the service

*Dennis* Those B-29s will need Ted [HALEY and DAVIS enter with weather map] Well, what have you got?

*Davis* The mass is denser but that's slowing it up It's about eighty miles behind expected drift now, sir

*Dennis* How much longer will that give us?

*Davis* The continent will be open for bombing all day tomorrow but this will start closing in our bases by fifteen hundred, sir

*Dennis* How does that fit, Haley?

*Haley* Lacks twenty-two minutes, sir We'd have to take off before first light

*Garnett* With that gas and bomb load? You'd be inviting formation collisions

*Haley* That's been the experience, sir

[EVANS enters with glasses Begins setting up an improvised bar]

*Dennis* But even by fifteen hundred tomorrow our returning planes could still see the island from, say, fifteen thousand feet?

*Davis* They could see where it is, sir This stuff will stack up over England like froth on a beer until it cools enough to move on

*Dennis* But it will be right down on the deck?

*Davis* I'm afraid it will be a crash landing condition, sir

*Dennis* Bring anything new as fast as you get it [DAVIS exits DENNIS detains HALEY] Have every spare parachute in the Division repacked this afternoon Tonight, repack enough from the planes so you can fill out with fresh packs for tomorrow

*Haley* [reacts, controls himself] Very well, sir

[Exits]

*Garnett* [horrified]. Casey, what the hell are you thinking of?

*Dennis* Paratroops do it Our crews will land on a friendly island

*Garnett* But the planes?

*Dennis* They're expendable The boys can leave them on automatic pilot so they'll fly out to sea and not crash in the villages

*Garnett* You'd throw away a whole Division of planes for one target?

*Dennis* If we don't finish Fendelhorst tomorrow we've thrown away precision bombardment That's all these planes are made for

*Garnett* Have you thought what they'll say in Washington?

*Dennis* I'm thinking what they'll say in Berlin

[BROCKHURST enters, chastened]

*Brockhurst* Dennis, I owe you an apology I thought you were a butcher Compared to Kane you're a starry-eyed Boy Scout

*Dennis* Take your troubles with General Kane to him

*Brockhurst* I'd take 'em to the whole country, if it weren't for your censors Kane has just sent Colonel Martin a recall signal

*Dennis* What? [Starts for door, checks himself, looks at watch and map, half smiles]

*Garnett* [horrified] He couldn't What, exactly, did he signal?

*Brockhurst* Discretion, to abandon primary target for a target of opportunity under fighter cover

*Garnett* Kane let Malcolm make him do that?

*Brockhurst* He'll tell you He asked me to send you down there [GARNETT exits BROCKHURST eyes DENNIS who is now studying map] That recall signal only establishes

Kane's personal alibi He *knows* Martin's already beyond fighter cover Recalling him now means taking the losses without getting the result—just from fear

*Dennis* American commanders have to fear losses, Mr Brockhurst

*Brockhurst* Because of those goddamned Congressmen?

*Dennis* Them and you

*Brockhurst* By me, you mean a free press?

*Dennis* And free speech There are only two choices Either the state controls the Army or the Army controls the state

*Brockhurst* So these cross purposes and confusions and compromises are the price of democracy?

*Dennis* Payable in boys Our freedom is not as free as it looks but it still beats the alternative

*Brockhurst* The boys don't pay all of it Kane's got you framed like a picture

*Dennis* General Kane is doing what he thinks best You don't understand the Army

*Brockhurst* It's only people I understand people

*Dennis* No it's not It's a receivership for the failures of people They give us these boys to wipe the slate clean It's the last resource The Army *has* to win

*Brockhurst* Even at the sacrifice of all humanity, honor and reason?

*Dennis* That's what war is, Mr Brockhurst If we win, those things may get another chance

*Brockhurst* Dennis, is there nothing I can do to help?

*Dennis* When these boys get your freedom back for you, you might try taking better care of it Until then the problem is killing

[KANE, GARNETT, PRESCOTT, MALCOLM and STONE enter]

*Kane* [at door] and I don't mind telling you it's a terrible responsibility

*Malcolm* It was a very courageous ordeh, General

*Stone* But I don't understand this

*Kane* [to DENNIS] General, as you know I pride myself on never interfering with normal operations But today's diversions were so obviously unsuccessful that I felt it my duty to recall Colonel Martin

*Malcolm* It was a brilliant command decision, Gennel It was woith ouah whole

trip oveh heah to fin' we got some commandehs with humanity enough not to deman' the impossible foh recohds

*Dennis* Did you get a reply from Colonel Martin, General Kane?

*Kane* No He'll probably preserve radio silence back to our fighters

*Stone* [persevering] Then Colonel Martin already *had* gone beyond fighter cover?

*Kane* Of course we're not *certain* he'd gone that far

*Malcolm* [secs whiskey, extricates Kane] Well looky here! Drinkin' whiskey fum Gawd's own country! Wheah in the worl' did you get this oveh heah, Sahgent?

*Evans* Present to General Dennis from an admirer, sir

[All throng to bar BROCKHURST recognizes the whiskey, smiles]

*Brockhurst* Yes, Sergeant, it was

[All except DENNIS begin to drink Overscene sound of teleprinter begins to clatter DENNIS reacts, but STONE detains him, persisting with question]

*Stone* Well—it seems to me that if Colonel Martin had already gone *beyond* fighter cover

*Malcolm* You mean Cunnel Mahtin had been sent beyon' fighteh coveh by Gennel Dennis when he knew his own self them diversions most likely wouldn't work am I right, Gennel?

*Dennis* You are

[HALEY enters with a message]

*Haley* Liaison message from a Royal Air Force reconnaissance plane, sir

*Dennis* Read it

*Haley* [reading] "Twelve thirty nine sighted large formation USAAF Fortresses approx ten forty six East, fifty forty North Altitude twenty two thousand, heading ninety eight "

*Kane* *Ninety eight* he's still going into Germany!

*Haley* [continuing reading] "Unescorted by friendly fighters, under heavy attack, formations good over "

[HALEY exits MALCOLM drinks deeply]

*Malcolm* "Unescohted an' undehe heavy attack !'" Gennel Kane, I'm wahnin' you if we eveh have anotheh attack like this

*Stone* Arthur! It's not our place to criticize If they think it's necessary

*Malcolm* Necessary! To slaughteh American youth foh one pig-headed Briga-



dieh to make hisself a puhsonal recohd

[HALEY enters, hesitantly]

Haley Message you should see, General  
Dennis

Kane [nervously] Read the message,  
Colonel!

Haley [reading] "Relay on personal  
cable from message center London in clear  
for Colonel Edward Martin new co-pilot  
made first landing four fourteen this morn-  
ing everything fine, Helen"

Dennis Jesus! Ted's got a son! Con-  
gratulations, Uncle!

[DENNIS and GARNETT shake KANE  
exploits the distraction]

Kane Gentlemen! Colonel Martin's  
son!

[Others throng to drink]

Dennis Haley, prepare a copy to relay to  
Ted but hold it till we hear

[HALEY exits]

Malcolm Till you heah what?

Dennis [cyeing watch] His strike signal  
It will be very soon now

Malcolm You telln' me this Cunnel out  
theah leadin' the attack been boh a daddy  
an' you ain't even goin' to radio him?

Dennis He's busy now

Kane [intervening] Fortunately, gentle-  
men, war also has its pleasant duties We'll  
have just time for one of them, General  
Dennis

[DENNIS looks rebellious, checks him-  
self, speaks off to OPS room EVANS  
speaks off to ante-room]

Evans Let's go

[A GI photographer with camera  
enters and takes position]

Malcolm Gennel Kane, you fin' to  
have this decoration ceremony you was  
telln' me about?

Kane Right now, Mr Malcolm

[HALEY enters with citation and medal  
box JENKS in best uniform enters  
after him MALCOLM jumps to exploit  
the hero]

Mr Malcolm Mr Stone Captain  
Jenks

Malcolm Son, I'm proud to meet you,  
mighty proud! Now if you'll just stan'  
oveh heah with me [Grabs JENKS,  
beckons photographer STONE jumps briskly  
to join them] Boy! I want a pictuah that  
will make all America proud of the  
Captain, heah [PHOTOGRAPHER manuevers  
MALCOLM and STONE almost crowd JENKS

out of picture] All right, son! Weah ready!

Evans Excuse me, sir

Kane [outraged] What ?

Evans Would the gentlemen from Con-  
gress like to put their glasses over here be-  
fore the photographing starts

[He steps to them, takes glasses from  
their hands as he speaks]

Stone Oh, yes thank you, Sergeant

Malcolm You goin' a long way in life,  
son!

[PHOTOGRAPHER snaps them, mugging  
and beaming]

Kane Now, gentlemen, I think we'd  
better go ahead

Malcolm Are you gettin' this, Elmeb  
boy?

Brockhurst I'm beginning to get it

[All regroup rapidly JENKS facing  
KANE, HALLEY beside them MALCOLM  
and STONE maneuver into good camera  
range HALLEY reads from citation]

Haley [reading] Captain Lucius Jenks  
for outstandingly heroic and meritorious  
conduct in Aerial Warfare

[Overscene sound of teleprinter clatter-  
ing is heard EVANS hurries to OPS  
room DENNIS watches him anxiously]

[Continues reading] Captain Jenks, first as  
pilot and later as Commander of the 1993rd  
Bombardment Squadron, Heavy

[HALEY breaks off as EVANS enters and  
hands DENNIS a strip of paper]

Dennis [reading] "No mistake this time  
Scratch Schweinhafen for me, Ted" Jesus,  
Haley! He got it He got it  
HE GOT IT!!! Signal him about his kid!

[HALEY exits GARNETT raises glass]

Garnett Gentlemen! The greatest com-  
bat leader in the Army Air Forces!

Kane [to BROCKHURST] Brockie, I want  
a feature story on Colonel Martin for this!

[All throng to drink, leaving MALCOLM  
piqued, beside the forgotten JENKS]

Malcolm Gennel Kane! Ain't we goin'  
to be photographed with you decoratin' this  
hero fum mah home state?

Prescott Sir! Colonel Martin's message  
asks you to scratch Schweinhafen for him  
Now, while the photographer is still  
here

[Proffers crayon KANE takes it to map  
CONGRESSMEN stampede to get into  
photo]

Kane [to PHOTOGRAPHER] Are we all  
right, son?



*Photographer* Pull your blouse down over your hips, General

[*PHOTOGRAPHER* trains on them, then stops as *HALEY* enters quietly, hands *DENNIS* a message *DENNIS* reads it, puts it down quietly, steps away from it Others watch uneasily *GARNETT* picks it up]

*Garnett* [reading] "Good luck, Casey, we're on fire and going "

*Malcolm* Goin' ? Finish the message, can't you?

*Garnett* That's all there is

*Malcolm* All all ? [*Steps over to DENNIS*] Listen heah! I want to know

*Dennis* Shut up!

*Malcolm* [getting it] You mean to tell me he's

*Dennis* SHUT UP!

*Malcolm* You telling me to shut up afeh you've done kilt the bes'

[*DENNIS* grabs him by lapels, shakes him savagely]

*Kane* Casey!

[*DENNIS* flings *MALCOLM* into a chair]

*Stone* General Kane, nobody could blame General Dennis

*Brockhurst* Let's both remember that, Mr Stone

*Garnett* Casey, do you realize what we've done to Ted?

*Dennis* Yes

*Garnett* But we'll have to one of us will have to tell Helen

*Dennis* I'll tell Helen and then I'll tell Claude Minter's wife

*Garnett* Claude Minter's wife? [*Eyeing him nervously*]

*Dennis* Yes I'll tell her I sent Claude to Fendelhorst tomorrow

*Garnett* Fendelhorst! Tomorrow!

*Kane* Casey, you leave me no choice I am relieving you of your command with immediate effect General Garnett, pending confirmation from Washington you will assume command of the Fifth Division [*Then sincerely to DENNIS*] I'm sorry, my boy I'm going to recommend you for the Legion of Merit

### ACT THREE

About eight o'clock that night *Cur-*  
*tain rises to discover room bare and service-*  
*able as in Act One*

*EVANS* enters, puts name plate with *Garnett's* name on desk, tosses *DENNIS's* name plate into trash box From offstage singing and mild carousel noises are audible *EVANS* shakes head disapprovingly, puts coffee to boil and gets out cigar box

*MAJOR DAYHUFF* enters, catching *EVANS* red handed with cigar box

*Dayhuff* [amused, covering it] Good evening, Evans Aren't you expecting the General?

*Evans* Any minute, now And I knew he'd want you to have a cigar

*Dayhuff* Thanks

[*EVANS* extends box It is empty]

*Evans* Congressmen! Sorry, sir I'll have this attended to

*Dayhuff* All right How did that wound in your arm heal, Sergeant?

*Evans* [with gesture] Fine, Doctor I can lift any girl in England off her feet

*Dayhuff* So I hear [*Mild carousel noises heard off*] Aren't you missing a good evening for recreation?

*Evans* I'll be off duty as soon as we send the order for tomorrow

*Dayhuff* Sergeant, I had it on good authority there wouldn't be a mission tomorrow

*Evans* Well, mine is straight from the horse's that is, General Kane When he left here he told Garnett he'd communicate his instructions as soon as he'd made an appreciation of the situation

*Dayhuff* Can you put that into English?

*Evans* Yes, sir Order, counter order, disorder and then five feet of teleprinted hot air meaning a milk run to the nearest Channel port

*Dayhuff* Oh I take it you don't approve of the change

*Evans* I expected it

*Dayhuff* Because of the way Dennis disagreed with those Congressmen?

*Evans* Hell no! They've all buried worse bodies than that Kane and Washington have been laying for Dennis a long time

*Dayhuff* What makes you think that?

*Evans* Dennis was trying to get the war over

*Dayhuff* That's a harsh judgment, Sergeant

*Evans* We got the signal from Wash-

ington confirming Garnett in two hours, didn't we?

Dayhuff While we're violating security, what did it say about Dennis?

Evans 'return to Washington by special plane, for reassignment'

Dayhuff. Well, for his sake I hope it's an easier assignment

Evans They'll probably make him Air Force Liaison to the Admiral Commanding the Washington Aquarium

Dayhuff I'm not so sure Washington will waste a man like that

Evans Maybe they'll let him burn top secret waste paper

Dayhuff When you get older it may occur to you that command is just as tough in Washington as anywhere else. Could you figure out the difference between Kane and Dennis from official reports?

Evans Very fast

Dayhuff How?

Evans Dennis always had his neck out a foot. But you have to look close for those two stars to tell Kane from a turtle. This Garnett's another

Dayhuff So you'll guarantee nothing worse than a milk run tomorrow?

Evans After what happened to Dennis listen to the boys. Disgusting, isn't it, sir?

[GARNETT enters]

Garnett Good evening, Evans. Anything from General Kane?

Evans No, sir

Voice [offstage] Where's my bottle?

Garnett What's that racket outside?

Evans Just some of the boys, sir

[Bottle crash offstage]

Garnett Well, call the guardhouse

Evans Excuse me, sir. May I attend to this for you, sir?

Garnett Yes

[EVANS goes to window, calls off]

Evans Hey, you, out there shut up!

Voice [off, evidently drunk] Who's telling me to shut up?

Evans I am

Voice Do you know who I am?

Evans I don't want to know who you are

Voice I am Captain George Washington Culpepper Lee!

Evans Well I am Tech Sergeant Harold Evans

Lee Oh a Technical Sergeant, eh?

Evans Speaking for Brigadier General Clifton C. Garnett! [Noise of swiftly receding feet and then silence] Thank you, sir

Garnett Thank you, Sergeant. See if there are any messages

[EVANS exits DAYHUFF grins]

Dayhuff I'm afraid I'm the real culprit, General Garnett

Garnett How?

Dayhuff I authorized a small allotment of whiskey from combat crew ration into the messes tonight

Garnett Is this usual?

Dayhuff No, sir. The last three days were not usual either, sir

Garnett Is the whole base in this condition?

Dayhuff No, sir! It wouldn't run one percent. Most of them are asleep

Garnett I see

Dayhuff This is a very special night, sir. And they're veterans. They know they can fly a milk run tomorrow sound asleep

Garnett Does the Division just assume that I'm going to order a milk run?

Dayhuff I'm not assuming, sir. That's what I came in to ask

Garnett There are a great many factors in this decision, Major

Dayhuff I represent one of them, sir

Garnett What is your medical estimate, Major?

Dayhuff When General Dennis planned Operation Stutch he requested a medical appreciation. I estimated the men could stand three successive days

Garnett Three?

Dayhuff We agreed that anything beyond that would have to be decided by military consideration

Garnett In short, the men could do it, if General Kane ordered it?

Dayhuff Men can do what they have to, sir

Garnett At a price, eh?

Dayhuff Well, sir, two-thirds of these men will be killed in a normal tour of duty anyway

Garnett Thank you, Major. [DAYHUFF exits GARNETT cogitates, calls off] Evans! [EVANS enters] Any word from General Kane?

Evans No, sir. Coffee's ready, sir

Garnett I didn't order coffee

Evans You will, sir

[GARNETT *sniffs it, likes it*]

Garnett Oh, thank you, Sergeant What else will I need?

Evans Cigars and whiskey, sir

Garnett I almost never use them

Evans Your visitors will, sir

Garnett Oh I guess you and I will be together some time, Evans Can you suggest anything else I need?

Evans You need a new sergeant, sir

Garnett What ? Oh, you're going home to work for General Dennis?

Evans [*bitterly*] No, sir, he wouldn't take me I guess they use colonels for errand boys in Washington I've decided to go to Nevada to teach gunnery

Garnett You've decided ? What do you think this Army is?

Evans I'd rather not answer that, sir But War Department Circular six nine five eight seven dash three says applications from graduate gunners to teach aerial gunnery will be accepted

Garnett Well, if the Circular authorizes it ask Colonel Haley to step in [EVANS *makes for door* GARNETT *checks him*] Evans, you are a graduate gunner?

Evans Yes, sir Twenty-eight missions

Garnett Would it be too much to ask these boys for a tough one tomorrow?

Evans I don't know, sir

Garnett You must know from your own experience

Evans Never had this experience, sir Nobody in the Army ever asked me anything They just told me

Garnett Ask Colonel Haley to step in [EVANS *exits* GARNETT *visibly sweats* HALEY *enters*] Good evening, Haley Any messages?

Haley Other Division commanders have sent compliments and will await your decision before planning tomorrow's mission, sir

Garnett Anything from General Kane?

Haley No, sir

Garnett Wasn't his weather conference tonight at eighteen hundred?

Haley Yes sir

Garnett I suppose on a tricky reading he might wait for twenty hundred developments?

Haley He might, sir

Garnett And we haven't had our twenty hundred weather yet

Haley Davis is marking the map now, sir If you want it at once

Garnett No, no Have you final figures from today yet?

Haley [*handing him paper*] Right here, sir

Garnett Thirty-nine lost four in the Channel what's this?

Haley Both reconnaissance planes, unreported again today, sir

Garnett Haley, what about morale?

Haley Very good now, sir. What you've heard tonight is just the normal let-down between tough missions and easy ones

Garnett Haley, what do these boys really think about?

Haley Their twenty-fifth mission, sir

Garnett Of course But what else?

Haley The normal things, sir And promotion and decoration, too

Garnett By the normal things, you mean ?

Haley Yes, sir Fortunately the villages around here are full of it

Garnett I should think it would lead to trouble

Haley It does, sir

Garnett What kind?

Haley Just the normal kind, sir These women have been at war a long time They know the men have to be up and dressed in time for missions

Garnett Is this immorality very widespread?

Haley Very, sir If it wasn't for the accent you couldn't tell 'em from Americans

Garnett So that kind of morale really takes care of itself?

Haley Yes, sir Keeps down perversion, too [*Then briskly*] If you're ready to go through status, sir

Garnett [*still talking*] Haley you really think the change of command has helped morale?

Haley They're pretty cheerful tonight, sir

Garnett Well, that's something You always wonder if they'll be hostile to a new face

Haley All generals look alike to them, sir [*Pause*] They figure a new general's always good for a couple of soft missions

Garnett Haley, are those last pictures developed?

Haley I'll find out, sir

[HALEY exits GARNETT stews, then looks up, startled, as CAPTAIN GEORGE WASHINGTON CULPEPPER LEE enters LEE is an attractive youngster, somewhat drunk He salutes with exaggerated formality]

Lee Captain Lee reports his presence, sir

Garnett Who?

Lee Captain George Washington Culpepper Lee, sir

Garnett Lee, you're drunk

Lee Yes, sir I've come in to report myself for that and to apologize for singing under your window and then running away

Garnett Get out of here and go to bed

Lee I'm sorry, sir This hasn't happened before and won't again

[Salutes, turns to go, GARNETT checks him]

Garnett Lee, did you go to Schweinhafen today?

Lee [thoughtfully, rather fuddled] Yes, sir I went to Schweinhafen today and I went to Schweinhafen yesterday and I went to Posenleben Friday and I've been to Hamburg and Bremen and Kiel and Schwainfurt and Regensburg

[Stops, horrified at himself] Excuse me, sir I only meant to say I'd been to twenty-four of them without taking a drink and I'm ashamed of myself for singing under your window on Easter Sunday

Garnett You go to bed, Lee It's all right even if it isn't Easter Sunday

Lee Beg your pardon, sir It's my Easter Sunday

Garnett Yours?

Lee Yes, sir Resurrection, sir Today was my twenty-fourth All I've got to do now is knock off one more little milk run and then go home and live the rest of my life

Garnett Oh Well, don't behave like this at home

Lee I wouldn't think of it, sir I'm going to get married

Garnett Well, congratulations!

Lee Yes, sir We almost did before I came over but I thought I thought she'd worry more that way

Garnett I see Now get to bed, the best of luck

Lee Thank you, sir And Happy Easter to you, sir

[LEE exits, leaving GARNETT to think that one over HALEY enters]

Haley The pictures will be up in a minute and there's a message, sir

Garnett From General Kane?

Haley No, sir The last group reports all crews provided with freshly packed parachutes for tomorrow in compliance with today's order

Garnett What order?

Haley General Dennis's last order this morning, sir If you remember it was not rescinded

Garnett But that was for a special weather condition Where is that weather man?

Haley Coming, sir It's a tricky reading

Garnett [hopefully] You mean, it looks worse?

Haley He'll have to tell you that, sir

Garnett And you're sure there's nothing from General Kane?

Haley Messages are brought as received, sir

Garnett We'll go through status, Haley Just give me totals

[They move to status board]

Haley I think I can promise a hundred and thirty planes by bomb loading, sir

Garnett One thirty that's not really four full groups, is it?

Haley Today was our third successive day of intensive operations, sir I'll bet the Germans would be glad to trade serviceability with me and they only have to repair single-engine fighters and find one man to a crew

Garnett I wasn't criticizing but we just haven't the strength that General Dennis had, have we?

Haley One thirty's enough for any target in the book, if they hit it

Garnett Planes, perhaps, how about crews?

Haley I've been able to piece out one thirty-two, sir

Garnett How many would be on their last mission?

Haley Eighteen, sir

Garnett A hundred and eighty boys

Haley It's a break for them, sir, to finish on an easy one, if it is an easy one

Garnett Of course that depends entirely on General Kane's orders

Haley Yes, sir If he sends orders Shall

I see about your weather, sir? [GARNETT picks up Directive Folder]

Garnett Haley, when General Dennis handed over to me this afternoon there was so much to take in I missed some of the details. It says here "In the absence of explicit target designation or other order from Higher Headquarters, Division Commanders will exercise their own discretion." When should this designation come down?

Haley From General Kane's eighteen hundred weather conference tonight, sir

Garnett And if we hear nothing this just applies automatically?

Haley Automatically, sir

[MAJOR LANSING enters, shirt sleeves rolled up, wet hands filled with wet pictures]

Lansing Last pictures from the camera ships in the last group on today's mission, sir

Garnett There are no pictures from reconnaissance?

Lansing No, sir. Both reconnaissance planes are unreported again today. These are all we'll have.

Garnett How are they?

Lansing [spreading them for scrutiny] Wonderful, sir. The next to last group did get the casting furnaces, you see here. And here where the main spar milling shop was there's nothing left but a compound crater.

Garnett Then it's complete?

Lansing Schweinhafen's complete, sir

Garnett I see. Nothing more on Colonel Martin? No parachutes showing in any of these strike photos?

Lansing It was very windy over Schweinhafen today, sir. The last group photos didn't catch any of the parachutes going down. We have one more sighting from Crew Interrogation that agrees exactly with the others. As the fire worked toward his gas tanks, Colonel Martin's plane swung away from the formation, of course, and then exploded. Four parachutes were seen to open afterwards but there were no individual identifications.

Garnett [eyeing the pictures] I wish he could know what he did.

Lansing Yes, but I'm glad he doesn't know we're not finishing the job.

Garnett That's not in our hands, Major.

Lansing I understand that, sir.

Garnett I want you to brief me now on

what targets would be best to give these boys a break tomorrow.

[They move to map. HALEY exits]

Lansing The Germans won't fight for anything in France tomorrow, sir. They need a rest as badly as we do.

Garnett You keep records of losses and loss expectancy over the different targets, of course?

Lansing Of course, sir.

Garnett Well, what would loss expectancy be along the coastal fringe here, on some of these naval objectives?

Lansing I wouldn't trust my memory for the figures, sir. But I can have a list prepared for you very quickly.

Garnett What would the targets be, the naval targets along here?

Lansing Minesweeper and E-boat bases along through there, sir.

Garnett We have attacked such objectives before, of course?

Lansing Yes, sir. For the blooding of new groups. Would you like a loss expectancy list prepared, sir?

Garnett Yes. [LANSING makes for door. GARNETT checks him] Major, I'd like to ask you a question.

Lansing Yes, sir.

Garnett If you had to decide tomorrow's mission for General Kane would you attack Fendelhorst?

Lansing Fendelhorst, sir! I'm thankful I don't have to decide that.

Garnett But if you did?

Lansing Sir, I'm afraid my decision would be influenced by a personal reason.

Garnett May I ask what that is?

Lansing General, I regret intruding thus upon your considerations. Since you ask me, I have a son, training now in a combat infantry division, assault. [Points to cross] When those jets have stopped our bombardment they'll make the deadliest strafing planes ever used against ground troops. I'm sorry, sir, but I'm afraid I couldn't help thinking of my boy going up a beach against them.

Garnett Yes, but what if your boy were flying a bomber tomorrow?

Lansing I hope I would send him to Fendelhorst, sir.

Garnett Thank you, Major.

[LANSING exits, leaving GARNETT to think that over. HALEY and DAVIS enter]

*Haley* Weather's ready, sir  
*Garnett* Is this the same report that General Kane is getting?

*Davis* No, sir This is my reading General Kane's weather people refuse either concurrence or disagreement

*Garnett* Isn't that unusual?

*Davis* Very unscientific, sir

*Haley* Often happens, sir In such cases we operate on our own weather reading subject to other instructions Directive covers it, sir

*Garnett* Well, what is it?

*Davis* [spreading map on table] That cold mass is still slowing down The entire continent will be open for bombing all day and you'll have until seventeen hundred over the bases here for landing, sir

*Garnett* Seventeen hundred five o'clock in the afternoon why that's enough for anything isn't it?

*Haley* Yes, sir

*Garnett* Even without parachutes

*Haley* Yes, sir

*Garnett* You're sure of this, Davis?

*Davis* Never sure with weather, sir If anything, though, this will improve for us during the night

*Garnett* Thank you, Major

*Davis* All right

[DAVIS exits GARNETT stews HALEY gets down to business]

*Haley* General Garnett, the group commanders need gas and bomb-loading orders Their ground crews are so exhausted it will take them twice as long as normal tonight

*Garnett* Haley, to be perfectly frank I understood I was going to receive instructions from General Kane

*Haley* But we haven't, sir And our directive says "In the absence of explicit target designation or other orders"

[EVANS enters with message]

*Evans* Message for General Garnett from General Kane, sir

*Garnett* [faintly] Read it

[EVANS looks perplexed, hands message to HALEY who reads]

*Haley* [reading] "General Kane compelled proceed hemisphere commander's dinner for Congressmen London, consequently unable to attend weather conference here Operating procedure will apply as per directive General Kane desires express especial confidence General Garnett's discretion

based on weather Signed Saybold for Kane"

[Deadly silence DENNIS enters in trench coat, carrying cap GARNETT gathers himself]

*Garnett* Come in, old man, I'll speak to you in a minute, Haley [HALEY and EVANS exeunt] Sit down, Casey

*Dennis* They've just reported my plane's landed and is taking gas The boys are loading my stuff

*Garnett* Damn it, man! You don't have to rush off like this

*Dennis* The order said "With immediate effect" Cliff I'm taking Ted's personal stuff to Helen

*Garnett* Good You'll go to see her at once?

*Dennis* Of course No more news, I suppose?

*Garnett* One more crew sighting, exactly like the others, four parachutes

*Dennis* Yeah

*Garnett* What will you tell her?

*Dennis* The truth She won't talk

*Garnett* How long do we keep it quiet?

*Dennis* For Ted, I'd like eight weeks They'd dig out every cave in Germany if they thought he was hiding in one of them

*Garnett* Do you think he is?

*Dennis* No Not with an explosion where he was riding

*Garnett* Casey, if he did get down alive and then they caught him what then?

*Dennis* If the Army gets him it's probably all right But no one can be responsible for what civilians, who've been bombed, will do

*Garnett* But if the Army gets him first it's all right?

*Dennis* Probably

*Garnett* I've been thinking all day about those six boys the Japanese captured alive

*Dennis* I won't go into that side of it with Helen

*Garnett* She'll be thinking of it She must have seen those pictures the Japanese released after they got through with them

*Dennis* Cliff! Will you stop talking about it?

*Garnett* I've been thinking about it all afternoon I was the guy who wanted a B-29 command God! When I think of ordering boys out over the Japanese

*Dennis* You don't have to think about it You've got a good job here Good luck, Cliff

*Garnett* Good, is it? Read that?

[*Hands DENNIS the message DENNIS reads it, speaks casually*]

*Dennis* Hemisphere commander's, eh? Well, they'll get real Martins That old son of a bitch has the best mess in London

*Garnett* Real Martins while I have to decide about tomorrow

*Dennis* You don't have to decide anything You're socked in with bad weather at fifteen hundred tomorrow afternoon

*Garnett* The weather's changed, Casey, it's good for anything

*Dennis* The hell you say! Isn't that just like the weather for you?

*Garnett* And Kane is passing the buck to me

*Dennis* Well, somebody's probably got a heel on his neck, too Good luck Cliff

*Garnett* Casey! You can't run out on me like this What am I going to do?

*Dennis* You're going to command, Clifton and you will be paid the first of every month

[*Fumbles with coat as if preparing to go*]

*Garnett* Casey, there's one more thing

*Dennis* [*eying watch*] Well ?

*Garnett* I had a boy in here tonight a pilot

*Dennis* Bitching and screaming like a wounded eagle, I suppose?

*Garnett* [*indignantly*] Hell no! He was a nice attractive kid with a lot of guts

*Dennis* They're all nice attractive kids with a lot of guts

*Garnett* I know, but this one was a little drunk

*Dennis* [*shocked*] Drunk in here [*Then, reflectively*] Oh I suppose his co-pilot was killed on the mission today. I've had those

*Garnett* No, no that wasn't it

*Dennis* Oh, just nerves? Well, the best thing with those, Cliff, is just to have the M.P.'s throw 'em into bed

*Garnett* Oh he wasn't that drunk

*Dennis* They need it sometimes Their crews will sober them up with oxygen in five minutes in the morning and then hop them up with enough benzedrine to get them through the mission This isn't Wash-

ington, Cliff, you can't be too strict with them

*Garnett* That's not it, Casey This boy gave me a personal slant

*Dennis* The War Department has provided you with a chaplain for that, Cliff Tell them to do their crying to him

*Garnett* Casey, he wasn't crying, he was happy He told me he's going to get married

*Dennis* And the only thing you can tell him is that you hope you won't have to kill him before he does It's your baby, Cliff, but I learned long ago to let the chaplain handle those He's our liaison with the Headquarters that decides that if there is one

*Garnett* Casey! What's happened to you?

*Dennis* Just what's going to happen to you and the sooner I get out of here, the sooner you can get to work

[*Starts for door GARNETT checks him*]

*Garnett* Casey! If you'll help me just this once

*Dennis* It isn't just this once It's from now on

*Garnett* When you first came over here you had Ted and Joe Lucas to talk to

*Dennis* Joe never talked He was commanding this Division, then, and I was running a group for him That's worse You see them at meals every day and you know a lot of them personally

*Garnett* But at least you had Joe for a boss until he got killed in that air raid, in London

*Dennis* Did you believe that story?

*Garnett* Why of course

*Dennis* Well, you're old enough to know better Joe didn't get killed in any air raid in London It was the night after we first sent them to Mangelburg Joe didn't want to send them He knew they weren't ready Kane knew it, too But they were crowding Joe and Kane from higher up Joe counted them in at landing that night and then he went down to London and took a hotel room and shot himself Then I got the job Now it's yours Good luck, Cliff

*Garnett* Joe Lucas did that how could he?

*Dennis* You'll see how he could Wait till you've counted in a really bad one that you've ordered yourself Wait till you start noticing the faces of those kids on the trucks

from the replacement centers the new ones, coming in Wait till you start waking up in the afternoon and wondering what it is that makes those faces look so much like the faces of the ones you're already killing, that same afternoon Then go out and puke up your powdered eggs and then take veronal to get back to sleep and then have them wake you up and give you benzedrine to keep you awake while you count in your stragglers and plan your next mission then you'll see how Joe Lucas could have done it

Garnett Joe Lucas! Of all the men in the service

Dennis Yes and I've wanted to do the same thing, five or six times when I've signed those field orders and so will you! But that was one thing Joe did for me He made me think that through That only helps one guy

Garnett But even after that you had Ted

Dennis Yes I had Ted That's one thing I've done for you, Cliff I've killed Ted You won't have to do that

Garnett Casey, you've hated this, every minute of it, haven't you?

Dennis I got paid for it

Garnett What will you do now, Casey?

Dennis Oh, I guess I still rate a training command I'm going to get one out West somewhere, where I can have Cathy and the kids with me and get a day off now and then to take the boy fishing

[HALEY enters with list]

Haley Here's the list Major Lansing prepared for you, sir

Garnett [dazedly] List?

Haley Yes, sir You ordered it, sir

Garnett Read it

Haley [reading] "Expectancy of losses from flak against French Channel port targets based on previous experience  
Brest, 49 Cherbourg, 34 Calais, 22 Dunkirk, 16 Dieppe, 14 "

Garnett That's enough

[HALEY puts list on desk, starts out  
DENNIS checks him]

Dennis Ernie how did my goodbye presents to the boys finally average out?

Haley Twenty-four percent Friday, twenty-six percent yesterday and twenty-nine percent today, sir

Dennis Some difference between those and the Channel ports

Haley Many differences, sir

Garnett [low voiced] Haley, notify the other Divisions and all our groups that tomorrow the Fifth Division will attack Fendelhorst

Haley Yes, sir

[Exits DENNIS half laughs, awkwardly]

Dennis Well . Cliff! Good luck General

Garnett Save me a job in that training command, will you?

[DENNIS starts out EVANS enters]

Evans Change of orders for General  
Dennis sir

Dennis No, you don't

Evans From Washington, sir

Dennis I've got my orders I've gone home

Evans We're instructed to relay the message to your plane, sir

[Hesitates GARNETT takes the message, reads aloud slowly]

Garnett "With immediate effect, General Dennis will proceed via Gibraltar, Cairo, Karachi, Calcutta and Chungking to " [Stops, horrified] My God, Casey this means a B-29 command

Dennis No, by God! They can't! I WON'T! [Then, slowly] Cliff, does that say "With immediate effect"?

Garnett I'm afraid it does, Casey

Dennis Yeah Evans! Get your things

THE END





## A LIST OF SUGGESTED READINGS

The following list of books and articles is in no sense of the word a Bibliography of Modern Drama. It is intended to provide additional reading for the amateur in search of enlightenment on various aspects of the theatre, playwriting, and the particular playwrights here anthologized. It is intended to be completely practical: publications in foreign languages and those books not apt to be available in general libraries have been rigorously excluded. Conversely, the titles included under at least Section A should form the basis of any collection of secondary material on the modern drama.

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- Henderson, Archibald, *European Dramatists*, New York, 1926
- Huneker, James, *Iconoclasts*, New York, 1905
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- Peacock, Ronald, *The Poet in the Theater*, New York, 1946
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## B SPECIAL TOPICS

### 1 Andreyev

- Dukes, Ashley, *The Youngest Drama*, Chicago, 1924
- Kaun, Alexander, *Leonid Andreyev, A Critical Study*, New York, 1924

### 2 Auden

- Auden, W. H., "Mimesis and Allegory," in *English Institute Annual*, New York, 1940
- Brooks, Cleanth, *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, Chapel Hill, 1939
- Spender, Stephen, "The Importance of W. H. Auden," *London Mercury*, XXXIX (April, 1939), 613-618
- And see, under A III, Bentley, Peacock, Thouless

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 See also, under A III, Huneker, Kauchler

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## 11 Howard

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And see, under A III, Bentley, Granville-Barker, Huneker, James, Kaucher

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